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New York

President:	Mrs. Alvear Valenzuela	(Chile)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Benin	Mr. Adechi
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Philippines	Mr. Baja
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Holliday

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2003/1053)

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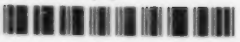

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2003/1053)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Liechtenstein, Mali, Mexico, Monaco, Myanmar, Norway, Sierra Leone, the Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda and Ukraine, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mrs. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Executive Director of UNICEF to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2003/1053, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

As another measure to optimize the use of our time in order to allow as many delegations as possible to take the floor, I shall not individually invite speakers to take seats at the table or invite them to resume their seats on the side. When a speaker is taking the floor, the Conference Officer will seat the next speaker on the list at the table. I thank members in advance for their understanding and cooperation.

Before giving the floor to Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, I should like to announce that, in relation to this debate, a brief video about the suffering and pain of children in armed conflict will be shown. The video was produced by War Child Canada, and I thank them for their contribution.

A video was projected on screen.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretariat for its cooperation.

Now that we have seen the video, I shall give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict. Mr. Olara Otunnu has the floor.

Mr. Otunnu: Madam President, thank you for being here today and for presiding personally over this

meeting of the Security Council. We appreciate enormously your personal commitment and the leadership of the delegation of Chile, which has been demonstrated within the United Nations and within the Organization of American States, and by you personally in the context of the Human Security Network. I thank you for being here today.

The struggle to ensure the protection, rights and well-being of children exposed to armed conflict has reached a watershed moment. A few years ago, the Security Council placed this issue on its agenda. We have come a long way since then. The developments, most of them in the realms of advocacy, development of standards and innovative initiatives, represent significant and concrete progress.

Sadly, in spite of these advances, I have to report that on the ground the general situation for children remains grave and unacceptable. Parties to conflicts continue to violate with impunity the rights of children. This is a cruel dichotomy, and herein lies the imperative for the era of application: a purposeful and concerted response.

Today the international community possesses, as never before, the means and collective influence to ensure compliance and protection. The challenge is that of will and choice. The Security Council must lead the way in taking measures that will create a critical mass, measures that are capable of making the era of application a reality for children exposed to war.

I should like to use this occasion to highlight several preoccupations for your consideration and action. Of particular importance is the need to establish a systematic and coordinated monitoring and reporting mechanism. This is indispensable. The Secretary-General's report before you (S/2003/1053) puts forth a set of proposals designed to serve as a basis for broad consultations on this issue among all stakeholders.

The impact of armed conflict on children takes grave and multiple forms. Children are killed, maimed, raped, abducted, denied humanitarian access, robbed of their birthright through the plunder of natural resources and used as child soldiers. All these children are victims of armed conflict. All these children look to the Security Council for protection.

A monitoring and reporting mechanism is of little value unless it leads to action, unless the information compiled can serve as triggers for action. In this regard, the Security Council must lead the way. It is the most important destination for action because of its primary responsibility for peace and security.

After careful monitoring, compilation and vetting, the Secretary-General has presented to the Council comprehensive and universal lists of parties to conflicts that continue to recruit and exploit children as child soldiers. Annex I of the Secretary-General's report names some 32 parties in six situations on the agenda of the Council, while annex II lists 22 parties in nine situations that are not on the Council's agenda. You now have before you, Madam President, the information necessary for action. At this watershed moment, I urge you to respond to the lists with concrete action, action commensurate with the gravity and scope of the violations in question.

Much effort is being deployed to develop United Nations response and innovations on the ground. I have to emphasize that effective response also requires increased political and material support for field programmes. I should like to pay special tribute to United Nations field teams and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for their indispensable contribution. In this connection, the leadership of my good colleague Carol Bellamy and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and that of Jean-Marie Guéhenno and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) have been especially invaluable.

United Nations agencies must assume particular responsibility for mainstreaming this issue. The time has come for United Nations agencies and their governing bodies, where appropriate, to translate their commitment to this agenda into concrete and systematic mainstreaming projects within their respective institutions. This should be measured in terms of priority setting, resource allocation and programming for the benefit of children affected by armed conflict. We must ensure, after the progress that has been made, that from now on the protection and rehabilitation of children are systematically incorporated into all stages of peace processes.

Regional and subregional organizations have a significant contribution to make to the realization of an era of application. The United Nations should encourage and cooperate with those organizations in their efforts to strengthen their advocacy and programme activities. In this connection, I particularly welcome the recent adoption of guidelines on children

in armed conflict by the European Union and the adoption by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) of a peer review framework on the protection of children.

In order to build a viable regime of protection on the ground, international actors need to support and reinforce local efforts. In particular, we need to do much more to strengthen the capacities of defenders of children who are labouring at the very front line of this struggle: national institutions and local and subregional civil society networks for advocacy, protection and rehabilitation. In the same spirit, I believe that we should support local communities in their efforts to reclaim and strengthen indigenous cultural norms that have traditionally provided for the protection of children and women in times of war.

The ending of armed conflicts is the beginning of salvation for war-affected children everywhere. That is why greater and more concerted efforts should be deployed to end ongoing conflicts and address the key factors that facilitate the occurrence and recurrence of conflicts. That is also why we should, on this occasion, particularly rejoice with the children of Burundi, Liberia, Sri Lanka and Sudan, for whom the prospects of peace at last — definitive peace — bring unbelievable relief.

Since I will be circulating the full text of my remarks, I wish to conclude by saying that I know that the Security Council must always take into account and balance various important factors before taking any action, but I hope that, at this watershed moment, the best interests of children — our children — will trump all other considerations. On them, after all, depend the prospects for future peace and progress in all our societies.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for his kind words addressed to me.

I now call on the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Ms. Carol Bellamy.

Ms. Bellamy: I, too, am quite pleased to join the Council today. I regret that I will not be able to remain for the entire discussion, as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Governing Board is presently also in session and I must return to its deliberations, but I appreciate the opportunity to be here. Let me also echo the words of my colleague Olara Otunnu in expressing our appreciation, Madame, for your personal as well as professional commitment on these issues.

I should like to begin by saying that UNICEF is deeply heartened by the Council's ongoing concern with the violations of the rights of children in armed conflict. I would also take this opportunity to commend Olara Otunnu, in particular, for his work in helping to draw global attention to these outrages.

As the past year has demonstrated, however, our efforts so far have fallen short of what is required. One example of our failure to protect children from the ravages of war is the reality we encounter in areas where humanitarian access has been denied. During the siege of Monrovia, the inability of the humanitarian community to gain access led to the unnecessary suffering of children and women. South-Eastern Afghanistan and the Darfur region of Sudan also illustrate the life-threatening consequences when access to children and women in need is denied.

In my travels, I have often witnessed the horrific impact of war on children. We can only begin to imagine — and I think the film captured some of it — how it must feel for a child to experience the fear and the uncertainty that come with the threat of war, the horror of war and the long aftermath, when schools are closed, routines of daily life are destroyed and children must try to cope with the loss of family, homes and community.

The report of the Secretary-General attempts to bring home the reality of what is happening. The numbers speak for themselves. We know, for example, that in Liberia there are an estimated 15,000 child soldiers, some of whom have been in the fighting forces for many years. A recent survey in Sierra Leone indicated that 17 per cent of displaced households reported sexual assaults, including rape, torture and sexual slavery. In mid-2003, there were 82 countries affected to some degree by landmines and/or unexploded ordnance, of which only 45 are States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Another devastating consequence of today's wars is that they create and exacerbate conditions that lead to HIV/AIDS. Women and girls are often left so destitute that trading sex for survival becomes the only

option for many. Other conditions, such as the disintegration of communities, displacement, the separation of children from their families, rape and sexual violence, and the destruction of schools and health services also fuel the spread of HIV/AIDS.

I am pleased to report that UNICEF is operational on the front lines every day. We are there before, during and — where there is success — after conflict, assisting with our colleagues in protecting and helping children. We do this with our many United Nations and non-governmental organization partners.

Child soldiers tend to be the face of children and armed conflict, but there are many other ways in which the rights of children are violated during armed conflict. For example, I recently returned from travel to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where I saw first hand — particularly in the eastern part of the country — the devastating impact of sexual violence. Girls, and sometimes boys, are targeted in campaigns of gender-based violence, including rape, prostitution, trafficking, forced pregnancy and sexual slavery. This past year, we have seen and been reminded once again that rape has been used systematically as a weapon of war and as a means to terrorize populations and destroy communities. Adolescent girls are often singled out for this abuse. In a hospital I visited in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, girls as young as four years old lay side by side with grandmothers in their 70s. And, indeed, I would report that those who seek medical help represent only a fraction — just a small portion — of the survivors.

We are working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with a variety of partners, in addition to our United Nations partners. I would mention the International Rescue Committee and the Italian non-governmental organization COOPI. We are working to try to provide care and support for survivors of sexual violence. One project supports a network of community women who reach out to survivors of rape. We are also providing support to several hospitals.

In situations of conflict, when people are extremely vulnerable, there is always the possibility that power may be abused. We, as humanitarian actors and as United Nations staff, must ensure that in our own behaviour we respect the highest standards of personal conduct. Supported by the Secretary-General's bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, which was issued a few months ago in October 2003, we are actively promoting these principles to maintain the highest possible standards and greatest vigilance in all situations within which we and our partners are working.

We have experience, I must say — given how many wars there are now — in demobilizing child soldiers. Throughout the past several years, our country offices have engaged in dialogue with groups and Governments using children as soldiers in order to try to bring an end to that terrible practice. The Secretary-General's list of parties to conflict who recruit and use children as soldiers has been a valuable advocacy tool in that regard. The list has also created opportunities for the Office of my colleague, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and our agency to pursue collaborative actions in our advocacy efforts on behalf of children in armed conflict.

I am also pleased to draw the Council's attention to an important new tool, a guide to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, jointly prepared by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and UNICEF. It is being released today. We hope it will enable child protection advocates, Government officials, ordinary citizens and children themselves to take and bring into usage the commitment of the Optional Protocol so that specific actions can be put into effect.

In Afghanistan, working with non-governmental organizations such as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), we are supporting a community-based demobilization and reintegration programme for child soldiers. We expect the programme to reach about 8,000 child soldiers over a three-year period, with formal education, accelerated learning, apprenticeships, vocational start-up kits and psychosocial and other support.

In Côte d'Ivoire, extremely difficult security conditions and political instability prevail. One of the lessons learned from past experience with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes that we have applied in Côte d'Ivoire is that child demobilization should not be contingent on formal peace processes or more comprehensive DDR exercises. Resources need to be made available for this as early as possible. We urge Council members to ensure that children's rights are taken into account

when the Council considers the revised mandate of the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire.

We have found that an essential part of re-establishing normalcy for demobilized child soldiers, as well as generally for children affected by conflict, is getting kids — boys and girls — back into school. In Liberia, we used some unconventional methods to distribute school materials. These included teachers using wheelbarrows to collect their school supplies, and a fleet of outboard canoes to reach river villages. We helped to train some 20,000 teachers and we helped in the rehabilitation of more than 3,000 schools, including working in conjunction with the schools to provide clean water and hygiene facilities. We undertook similar activities in Afghanistan, although we did not use wheelbarrows; I think we used four-legged beasts there.

When entire communities are in a state of flux, schools can provide a haven. It is therefore vital that their sanctity be protected. The misuse of schools, their occupation and attacks on them are among the worst violations of children's rights. They are also a violation of one of the most basic principles of the laws of war: that civilian sites must be protected.

Effective monitoring and reporting — again, as my colleague said earlier — on children's rights violations are essential conditions for ending impunity for crimes committed against children. The Secretary-General's report and the draft resolution on children and armed conflict contain many ideas on improving monitoring and reporting in order to hold accountable those who deliberately target, abuse or exploit children during war.

When the lives and the rights of children are at stake, there must be no silent witnesses. The challenge before us is to improve monitoring and reporting on children's rights violations by modifying and strengthening the existing human rights system so that it can better perform its intended function. There are a variety of supports out there, and I have listed them in my prepared testimony. With our partners, over the next few months, we will attempt to identify even clearer indicators and to strengthen our capacity in this area.

Monitoring and reporting serve a key function. They allow the development of a record of violations and, in so doing, provide an essential foundation for pursuing justice, accountability and, ultimately, reconciliation. It is essential that mechanisms established for such purposes be sensitive to the special situation of children and provide appropriate procedures for their participation.

While boys and girls continue to be targeted, abused and exploited — whether as soldiers, as sex slaves or both — it is important to bear in mind that there are significant ways that young people themselves are demonstrating their resilience and their ability to overcome the violence around them. I would call attention to this having been demonstrated in Timor-Leste, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Colombia.

One particularly innovative example is in the occupied Palestinian territory, where a Child-Friendly Cities framework is being piloted. Children's municipal councils — containing about 50 per cent boys and 50 per cent girls — have been set up in each of the cities to give young people an opportunity to plan and implement activities that will help improve and rebuild community life.

We appreciate the continued commitment by the Council to deal with the situation of children in armed conflict. The Secretary-General's list on the use of child soldiers, in particular, is a vital step forward. It is important to maintain the Secretary-General's list on an annual basis, and to ensure that its scope be extended to situations not strictly on the Council's agenda. Such an annual list will allow the Council to track progress made or commitments not kept. It can also request more detailed information on actions taken by the parties on the list and decide upon measures it may take to encourage greater progress in this regard. We stand ready to provide any information that the Council may wish to receive.

We encourage the Council to request, as a matter of routine, that information on child protection issues be included in all peacekeeping mandates, as well as in country-specific and thematic reports. Some of the specific issues that should be highlighted are the demobilization of child soldiers; justice, accountability and reconciliation; refugees and internally displaced persons; and gender-based violence. The Council's upcoming debates on the possible creation of several new missions and on the renewal of existing ones provide important opportunities to do exactly that.

We must ensure that children are protected from violence, abuse and exploitation. We must be able to tell children everywhere that they and their families

will be protected, that they will be able to go to school every day, that their health centres will be open and functioning and that those who abused them during the war will be brought to justice. The Security Council has a vital role to play.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund for her statement and for her kind words addressed to me.

I shall now give the floor to members of the Council.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish at the outset to express our honour and pleasure at seeing you, Madam, presiding over the work of the Security Council on this very important and sensitive issue. Your presence, Madam Minister, in the Chair adds honour and prestige to the excellent work being performed by the Chilean presidency in the person of the Permanent Representative of Chile, Ambassador Heraldo Muñoz.

(*spoke in English*)

The Council has before it a comprehensive report (S/2003/1053) submitted by the Secretary-General, who deserves our congratulations. I would also like to thank Mr. Olara Otunnu and Ms. Carol Bellamy for their introductory remarks. I should add that the report constitutes a step forward in the efforts that the United Nations began to undertake more than 10 years ago, when the first Independent Expert on children and armed conflict was appointed.

Creating a world fit for children is tantamount to guaranteeing the future of all humankind. In recent years, United Nations efforts to focus international attention on child-specific issues in the context of armed conflicts have been expanding in order to respond to the demand for action, given the seriousness of the issue and the growing number of conflicts affecting children in different parts of the world.

Brazil, for its part, has always attached great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. Over the years, negotiations concerning the international instruments related to this issue have been a continuous source of inspiration for our legislators and policy makers. Brazil is fully committed to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and has recently ratified the Optional Protocols thereto.

The situation of children continues to be alarming, as they are preyed upon by parties to armed conflict around the world. Their vulnerability makes them easy victims of all sorts of abuse and gross violations of humanitarian law. It is precisely because the efforts of the international community to address this problem still fall short of what is needed to end the grievous suffering of children in armed conflict that this issue must continue to be taken up by the United Nations system and, most appropriately, by the Security Council.

In order to maximize the effect of the Council's action in this regard, it seems to our delegation that close coordination with the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council is needed, given the complexity of the issue, the social and economic responsibilities of those organs and their central role in ensuring assistance to children in need.

Indeed, the treatment to be given to the issue of children and armed conflict will certainly benefit greatly if the issue is squarely placed within the context of the more general problem of children in need. This is a task that various organs of the United Nations system must address in the context of close coordination and cooperation among themselves as well as with Member States and non-governmental organizations. Coordination among the relevant departments of the Secretariat also should be strengthened and continuously reviewed.

The Secretary-General's report contains constructive elements that, further developed and duly implemented, are capable of greatly improving the situation. One of those elements is the provision of a list of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in conflict situations, which would seem to be an indispensable tool for the purpose of devising strategies to deal with the problem.

For such a list to become a more efficient instrument, however, it must be made as precise as possible through continuous updating and refinement. This entails the creation of institutional mechanisms capable of leading the process of engagement with the parties responsible for the involvement of children in armed conflict. Needless to say, such mechanisms should also be reporting mechanisms. This also includes the possibility of adding or excluding names.

As it is not possible to ascribe that responsibility to one single agency or actor within the United Nations

family, given the uneven presence of such bodies in the afflicted areas, such mechanisms should include, to the extent possible, members of the Special Representative's office, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other relevant United Nations agencies having adequate field presence in designated areas, and child protection advisers, whose participation in peacekeeping operations has proved useful and is therefore deserving of expansion.

Once established, such working groups would be able to open lines of dialogue with parties in conflict, extract commitments regarding action plans for the demobilization of child soldiers, and monitor compliance. The information provided by such mechanisms would be the basis for all further action.

Such mechanisms could also be responsible for ensuring that special provisions for children are included in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, keeping in mind the stigmatization faced by children in armed conflict. The handing-in of weapons should not, however, be required for eligibility, which should be defined by broad criteria, in order to include not only combatants, but also those in ancillary activities. Monitoring and follow-up of demobilized children is also necessary.

Brazil is in favour of applying a graduated and targeted approach with regard to parties that fail to adopt measures aimed at ending violations concerning children and armed conflict. As to this point, the Secretary-General has made constructive recommendations in his report, such as the imposition of travel restrictions on leaders and their exclusion from Government structures and amnesty provisions; a ban on the export or supply of small arms; a ban on military assistance; and restrictions on the flow of financial resources to the parties concerned.

For such measures to be implemented, they must first rely on precise information, and, secondly, they must be finely tuned, so as to avoid problems common to sanctions and the conditioning of assistance, which often delay and even prevent the provision of humanitarian aid to those who most need it — in this case, children trapped in situations of conflict.

Given the persistence of the problem of children exposed to armed conflict and the need for more developments in the field, the Security Council should demonstrate its political will and, within the scope of its functions and powers, take upon itself the responsibility for maximizing the United Nations system's response to the issue of children in armed conflict. That is what is required if we are successfully to prevent childhood from being a primary victim of warfare. That is what is necessary to uphold the rights of children and to guarantee a future in which children can be bearers of hope and confidence as they emerge from conflict situations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Brazil for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first of all, Madam, very sincerely to thank you for having convened and for presiding over the fifth debate on this extremely important topic. Algeria is gratified that the United Nations system has taken a holistic approach to combat illegality and silence and that it has mobilized to safeguard the rights and the well-being of children, as exemplified by the outstanding work of Mr. Olara Otunnu.

Today's debate is taking place at a time when the momentum created some years ago by the Security Council is reaching the critical stage of the implementation and follow-up of its earlier resolutions. The fact that the Security Council regularly discusses this topic is evidence of the high level of interest that we attach to this issue, which is at the point of convergence between international peace and security and human rights. This twofold connection reminds us that we have a duty to be vigilant and an obligation to succeed.

To that end, we have today at our disposal a framework of binding rules that includes many international, universal and regional instruments on the protection of the rights of the child, which are complemented by the Geneva Conventions.

Regrettably, the qualitative progress that has been made at the normative level and with respect to the commitments made, in particular during the special session of the General Assembly on children, has not yet had the expected results. This is clearly stated by the Secretary-General, who emphasizes that the general situation of children remains grave and preoccupying. The extent of the tragedy is highlighted by the long list of violations and grave abuses committed against children in situations of armed conflict. The multidimensional nature of this tragedy, which affects the most vulnerable sector of humanity, reminds us that

there is an urgent need for the Security Council effectively to discharge its responsibilities.

It also emphasizes the need to promote an approach that integrates, from the conceptual point of view and with respect to the practical follow-up of our resolutions, all issues related to the rights of children in armed conflict, in order to arrive at an integrated and comprehensive solution.

When dealing with this question, we cannot overlook the underlying causes that lead to the emergence and development of conflicts, of which children are the primary victims. That is why this question cannot be addressed separately from the issue of conflict prevention, which requires, inter alia, ensuring a number of rights — to education, social protection, health care and a wholesome natural environment — which all are standards that should inspire and guide all productive efforts to promote and protect the rights of the child.

Algeria welcomes and encourages the integration of the dimension of the protection of the rights of the child in peacekeeping missions, which represent an indispensable element of the follow-up and monitoring effort.

It is also essential that the follow-up and reporting system be based on credible information and that it attach priority to the most serious violations, such as the recruitment of children, massacres and mutilations, sexual violence, the use of children for the illicit exploitation of natural resources, abductions, and the denial to children of access to humanitarian assistance.

In order to be fully effective, the follow-up system must be based on reports that are precise, objective and supplemented by appropriate measures.

To that end, the United Nations system has an effective protection and monitoring system that includes treaty-based mechanisms and special procedures, whose recognized expertise and effective potential must be part of a synergetic process that is complemented by the indispensable contribution of United Nations bodies with a presence in the field. In that context, the role of Mr. Otunnu's Office is essential in providing leadership, coordinating follow-up and disseminating information. Non-governmental organizations and local structures of civil society also deserve praise for the role they play.

The relevant recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General ensure that the nascent system of implementation is long-lasting and irreversible. Algeria welcomes the adaptability and flexibility planned for the system, ensuring that each situation receives individual treatment. Its evolving nature is the best guarantee of its effectiveness.

Algeria supports the principle of systematically incorporating children's issues into peace negotiations and agreements, making them essential components of post-conflict programmes. Algeria also supports finalizing an effective monitoring and vigilance mechanism in which non-governmental organizations would have a role to play.

Algeria supports the updating of the lists and hopes to see the inclusion of specific situations of children living under foreign occupation. In that regard, Algeria encourages all appropriate measures to be taken when the parties have not made progress or have not made sufficient progress in the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. However, such measures must be targeted in such a way that the children do not suffer directly from their negative effects. The illicit trade in natural resources and small arms also calls for appropriate measures to be taken.

Monitoring and the imposition of justified sanctions will suffice only if they are strengthened by complementary parallel measures. We believe the most important of such measures is an increase in the resources allocated to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes through planned, predictable and adequate financing.

The need to be effective requires close support — so necessary for long-term undertakings such as the present one. In that regard, Algeria particularly supports the growing involvement of regional organizations and urges support for their activities. The African Commission on Human and People's Rights, which deserves credit for being the first to outlaw the recruitment of children under the age of 18, can fully play that role of close support once its means for action have been strengthened.

In conclusion, let me say that today's debate touches on the very essence of human dignity, which is not only a value shared by all but also an essential foundation of our Organization. It therefore requires of us the adoption of a global approach based on

solidarity. It is through such an approach, which draws its inspiration from the universal need for peace, democracy and development, that we will be able to "give the world to the children", to use the beautiful expression of the great poet Nazim Hikmet.

Mr. Adechi (Benin) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes you, Madam, and expresses its satisfaction at seeing you preside over the Council's work. And we associate ourselves with the thanks addressed to you for organizing this open Security Council meeting on children and armed conflict. Today's debate demonstrates the Security Council's concern about the situation of children in countries in conflict, particularly the situation of child soldiers torn from their communities by warlords who use drugs and psychological and physical violence to turn them into fierce soldiers serving causes of which they know nothing.

To stay within the five minutes given to members for their statements, I shall confine myself to just some of our concerns. The full text of my statement will be made available to delegations.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2003/1053) of 10 November 2003 addressed to the Security Council and the General Assembly pursuant to resolution 1460 (2003). The report fully analyses the question of children in armed conflict. The assessment of the progress made in protection is particularly important as a sign of the international community's awareness of the serious nature of the problem and of the need to redouble its efforts to eradicate the violence perpetrated against children. It is clear from this exhaustive report that the mechanisms for protecting children in conflicts have been strengthened in recent years by new elements at the international, regional and local levels. In that respect, we stress the obligation on belligerents to scrupulously abide by the Geneva Conventions on international humanitarian law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It is good that pursuant to its resolutions in this area, the Security Council now has a list of groups and other entities that recruit children and use them in conflicts. It is now up to the Security Council to take bold deterrent measures to put an end to the impunity enjoyed by those guilty of crimes against children. Here, resolutions 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003) provide a good starting point. If the Security Council announced stricter measures, it would add credibility to efforts in the area of prevention and would make them more effective.

As did the Secretary-General, my delegation underlines the initiatives taken by the Economic Community of West African States, in particular the adoption in 2000 of the Accra Declaration and Plan of Action on War-Affected Children and the measures subsequently taken in the context of the implementation of those documents. Nevertheless, the problem remains crucial in the subregion of West Africa, which requires active mobilization by the international community to end the recruitment of child soldiers, which, unfortunately, continues.

My delegation believes that in order to be effective the campaign against the abuses and crimes of war of which conflict-affected children are victims, must be waged taking into consideration all factors that incite those abuses. In that respect, my delegation views as very well founded the identification of the link between violations of the rights of children and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, landmines and unexploded ordinance. It is obvious that the progress that could be made in combating the proliferation of such weapons could have a real impact on war-affected children. It is therefore a matter of urgency that the differences of view preventing the international community from effectively waging a campaign against those scourges be overcome. The ease with which non-State armed groups acquire weapons is completely incomprehensible and calls for action by the Security Council, which has the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

Another phenomenon that has emerged alongside the violation of the rights of children is the illegal exploitation of natural resources, an area in which children are being used in horrendous conditions — as is well known — and are subjected to a multitude of abuses. The resources illicitly procured in this manner fuel and indefinitely prolong conflicts. The Security Council needs the means to put an end to those practices and to enable the people of the countries concerned to exploit their own natural resources peacefully in order to promote their economic and social development under the political regime of their choice. My delegation supports all the efforts that that have and could be made in this area. We hope that the relevant bodies of the United Nations system will act immediately on the ground. We are grateful to the

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the important work it has done to assist children everywhere there is a need. We also welcome the interest non-governmental organizations have shown in protecting children in conflicts.

It is also important for peacekeeping operations authorized by the Security Council to be planned in a way that provides a framework for the recovery of war-affected children. From that point of view, responding to the needs of those children should be an essential component of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Such an approach would benefit affected children and the international community as a whole, because it would make it possible to facilitate the return of children to normal civilian life and to replace the culture of violence inculcated in their minds with a culture of peace.

In conclusion, my delegation believes it is important that today's discussion lead to concrete measures on the part of the Security Council to implement the Secretary-General's recommendations and the relevant proposals made during this open meeting. In that respect, my delegation is prepared to contribute in the coming days to the formulation and adoption of the draft resolution initiated by the French delegation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Benin for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): It is most appropriate, and we in the Security Council are particularly honoured, that this meeting is being presided over by you, Madam Minister, which is a way of according to our deliberations the high importance that they deserve.

I should like to thank the Chilean presidency for convening this meeting, which translates the Security Council's concern and renewed awareness about one of today's most critical humanitarian issues, which the international community must redouble its efforts to eradicate completely from contemporary life. The abuse of children and their exploitation to wage war constitute the coarsest violation of human rights as well as an unspeakable act of violence against the universal conscience in a world that should aspire to full respect for the integrity and development of human life.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2003/1053), and we express our gratitude to Mr. Olara Otunnu and Ms. Carol Bellamy for their briefings this morning. We fully appreciate their important contributions on behalf of children caught in the middle of armed conflicts — contributions aimed at reducing their suffering and eradicating this most condemnable phenomenon.

Thanks to the efforts of the Secretary-General, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and relevant United Nations bodies, an international consensus has been reached to end the involvement of children in armed conflicts and to recognize children's rights in any conflict situation. Such is the basic assumption embodied in the Secretary-General's report on the issue we are considering today, leading to some very important conclusions.

The first is the commitment of the Secretary-General and of the entire United Nations system to improve and change the situation of children in armed conflict. The second is the existence of a framework comprising standards, norms, best practices and policies, establishing benchmarks to be achieved by the actors in armed conflicts and by the international community in order to push forward the fundamental objectives of protecting children and putting an end to such abhorrent violations of children's human rights. The third is the naming and shaming of those involved in such practices. It is our expectation that that can be a factor of deterrence or, otherwise, the first phase of a process conducive to the imposition of targeted measures against those who persist in challenging the international community on such fundamental humanitarian issues.

The Secretary-General's report refers in a number of instances to the advances achieved in the protection of children affected by armed conflict. The inclusion of this issue on the Security Council's agenda is an important contribution to such an endeavour. The Council's adoption of four resolutions and its undertaking of relevant initiatives such as the integration of child protection into the mandates and reports of peacekeeping missions and the training of personnel to that end, as well as the creation of child protection advisers and their deployment in peacekeeping missions, are clear indications of the progress we have accomplished.

Important international instruments are in force, and concrete commitments on the protection of children have been obtained from parties to conflicts. In that regard, we fully agree with the strategy, outlined by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, of strengthening the foundation of an era of implementation by facing the challenge of ensuring the implementation of these standards on the ground.

The section of the report on the follow-up to Security Council resolution 1460 (2003) portrays a reality that is distressing indeed. Particular violations and abuses against children, such as killing, maiming, sexual and gender-based violence and the abduction of children, continue unabated, with all parties mentioned in the previous report engaged in the recruitment and abuse of children — a situation that we condemn in the strongest terms and that must be reversed through determination and coordination of efforts on the part of the stakeholders.

My delegation fully supports the blueprint for action outlined in the Secretary-General's report to counter the vicious exploitation of children in situations of armed conflict. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes must become an integral part of peacekeeping operations and must include specific provisions for the protection of children. The deployment of child protection advisers in all peacekeeping missions must become normal practice, ensuring that the situation of all children affected by conflict is properly addressed. The awareness of the parties to conflict must be further intensified and refined with a view to obtaining concrete commitments concerning the well-being of children and ending child soldiering. The proposal put forward by the Special Representative to ensure more effective monitoring and reporting within the United Nations system must become a central element in the fight against the abuse of children in conflict situations. We are convinced that those proposals, if effectively brought into practice, will give a decisive boost to the universal struggle against this condemnable state of affairs.

In that connection, we consider it important to strengthen the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the role it has played in facilitating and coordinating the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism to achieve our objectives. Angola fully commends the Office's mandate and recognizes the importance of supporting it from the United Nations regular budget, as decided in General Assembly resolution 58/245, adopted by the Assembly last month.

After 25 years of armed conflict, my country, Angola, is now in the process of reintegrating into normal life many thousands of children affected by that conflict. Several steps have been taken and policies have been put in place to guarantee the safety and social reintegration of those children. The first is the establishment of a youth court to receive complaints regarding crimes committed against minors, in particular those affected by the conflict. The second is a family localization and recruitment programme to help reunite children separated from their families during the conflict.

The third is a national programme of free birth certification, in collaboration with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

In 2003, more than 600,000 children affected by the conflict have been successfully integrated into the national educational system. A number of programmes for the reintegration of children in their communities and for their mental and physical recovery have also been established, as well as a disarmament and mine-clearance programme aimed at protecting and safeguarding the well-being of children.

A lot remains to be done in solving this most painful heritage of war. But the Angolan Government, civil society and the Angolan nation at large are determined, with the assistance of the international community, including the international civil servants and non-governmental organizations, to definitively turn this dark page of our recent history and ensure for the Angolan youth a life of dignity and a future with renewed hope.

To conclude, I would like to refer to the last recommendation contained in the Secretary-General's report (S/2003/1053), which addresses what we believe to be the core question of the issue we are discussing today. In fact, we fully subscribe to the recommendation that greater and more concerted efforts be deployed to end ongoing conflicts, which are destroying the lives of millions of children, and to address the key factors that facilitate the occurrence and recurrence of conflict. This is not only possible, it is imperative.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Angola for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Konuzin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are happy to welcome you to the Security Council chamber, Madam President. We are grateful to Mr. Olara Otunnu for his briefing, his introduction to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/1053) and for the work he does to protect children in conflict. We are grateful to Ms. Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for her major contribution to the work of the Council today.

Children are one of the most vulnerable segments of populations in armed conflicts. Children who participate in hostilities, children who are the victims of war, refugee children, disabled children and outcast children — these have become the tragic result of many civil and international conflicts. Given the magnitude and severity of this phenomenon, particularly in Africa, it can be viewed as a new threat to peace and security in individual regions.

The protection of the rights of children, inter alia, in armed conflict and in post-conflict situations, is one of the most important tasks of the international community. The most reliable way to protect children is to prevent conflicts from arising. Here it is hard to overestimate the role played by the United Nations and its Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

We appreciate the report of the Secretary-General prepared for today's meeting of the Security Council, and we would like to dwell on a few points that we think are of priority importance.

First is the problem of the use of child soldiers by armed groups — and not just by illegal armed groups, either, but by Government forces as well. We strongly condemn the recruitment of child soldiers. According to international law, these are war crimes that are massive in nature. In this connection, we support the efforts of the Secretary-General to identify those parties to armed conflicts that continue the outrageous practice of using child combatants. However, we would like to refer here to the need for a more careful, more balanced approach to a legal assessment of the situation and to the need for correct terminology, in particular when talking about specific countries' situations.

It is important that the international community, including the United Nations Security Council, become more actively involved in resolving this problem. We need to consider how already adopted Security Council decisions in this area are being implemented, and we need to appeal to specific culprits to stop recruiting or using children in armed conflicts. It is time to assess what practical measures, including measures contained in Council resolutions, need to be taken against those people who systematically disregard the requirements of the Security Council in this area.

However, international efforts in this area are clearly insufficient. We regret that national bodies are not demonstrating the proper will to do this, although they are the ones that bear the primary responsibility for resolving the problem of impunity. We need to take a careful look and see whether countries that are affected by this scourge have a sufficient legislative foundation and we need to see how adequate their system of justice is. If necessary, the international community could provide appropriate assistance.

We agree with the widely held view of the usefulness of an additional system of monitoring and information regarding the protection of children in armed conflict in individual sub-regions. For example, given the transborder nature of this problem in Western Africa, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in this sub-region, in cooperation with the United Nations missions in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone, could undertake this monitoring.

We agree with the sections of the report that refer to the mainstreaming of the child factor in the mandates of peacekeeping missions, to providing access to humanitarian organizations in conflict areas, to the separation of civilians from combatants and to the maintenance of the civilian nature of places where refugees and internally displaced persons are held.

An important topic is the sexual exploitation of children, in particular that of girls, who are the most vulnerable group of the population in conflict situations in this respect. Particularly outrageous are instances where sexual violence is practised not merely by armed factions and groups, but by humanitarian personnel and by peacekeepers, in whom the victims place special trust and from whom they expect

kindness and assistance. Russia fully supports the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to provide comprehensive training for United Nations personnel, to establish strict control over their behaviour and to prevent impunity for the perpetrators.

The implementation of the humanitarian component of the protection of children in armed conflict should be a particular prerogative of the specialized organizations — the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross and others that have their own mandates. Overall political support in implementing these tasks should be provided by the Security Council, with a key role played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict, in particular when it comes to helping to create and coordinate activities in the monitoring mechanism. It is hard to overestimate the role that is being played here by the many non-governmental organizations. These selfless people deserve our particular gratitude.

We hope that the draft document that will be adopted following today's discussion will reflect the need for strict compliance with the United Nations Charter and the appropriate resolutions of the Security Council, as well as the norms and principles of international law, including humanitarian law.

Mr. Motoc (Romania) (*spoke in French*): It is a great pleasure for my delegation, Madame, to see you personally presiding over the Council. Your presence here today, as the Council is seized with a phenomenon, the magnitude and cruelty of which were sadly recalled to mind by the powerful video we have just seen, reinforces the message we intend to send. We welcome the very well-documented and motivational briefing provided by Special Representative Olara Otunnu, as well as his overall dedication to the protection of children. We welcome the presence of Ms. Carol Bellamy and her tremendous work at the helm of the United Nations Children's Fund.

The delegation of Romania fully associates itself with the statement to be made by the Irish Presidency of the European Union.

The recruitment of children as fighters in combat zones throughout the world and the many facets of their exploitation are a shameful reality of our contemporary world. The fact that the Security Council has decided to address the scourge of children in war is remarkable and we rejoice that our forum is so strongly committed to that topic and to see that so many Members of the United Nations have come to express their interest in today's debate.

A child soldier — removed from his family and compelled to confront the horror of war, where he will often be injured, mutilated or mentally traumatized by the fear and hatred engraved in his memory — is not merely deprived of his childhood; his fate as an adult is also jeopardized. The adoption of resolution 1460 (2003) was a step forward in our common task to prevent such tragedy from striking the lives of many children and to alleviate whatever harm may already have been caused. One element of the resolution that we believe deserves particular attention is the stand taken on situations in which women and children — girls in particular — have been victims of sexual exploitation or abuse in the context of a humanitarian crisis, especially when the perpetrators are peacekeepers or humanitarian personnel.

Today, considering the Secretary-General's remarkable report, we learn with satisfaction that the six core principles elaborated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee have been incorporated into the code of conduct of the staff of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. This is a major step forward and Romania, as a country that provides significant troop contingents to peacekeeping missions in several parts of the world, can only welcome the Secretary-General's intention to extend the application of those principles to the personnel of the United Nations as a whole.

I take this opportunity to recall that Romania was among the first countries to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. We have taken note with great interest and are carefully analysing the recommendations made in the Secretary-General's report designed to intensify the struggle against the recruitment and involvement of children in armed conflict.

The time has indeed come to ensure that the existing standards are effectively applied by the parties concerned. To that end, we support the establishment of a systematic, objective and comprehensive

mechanism to follow up and report on violations of children's rights in conflict areas. To that end, using the United Nations network in the field in conflict zones would seem to be the most suitable solution. At the same time, one United Nations agency in the field will have to act as a focal point for such a mechanism, facilitating a coherent and effective dialogue with the parties to a conflict and the conceptualization and implementation of specific plans of action, for instance in the field of education. We support the potential role of the International Criminal Court in prosecuting and sentencing those guilty of war crimes against children.

I wish to express our full appreciation for the prodigious efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, whose dedication to and competence in the protection of children in armed conflict are well known. We hope that he will be able to pursue the implementation of the proposals set out in his report of August 2003, to play an active role in reviewing information on violations of protection standards for children in times of war, and to propose follow-up action.

We must not forget the progress achieved outside the United Nations context thanks to the tremendous efforts of non-governmental and civil society organizations, including at the regional level. We encourage them to pursue their outstanding work in the field, including in preventing recruitment, in relieving the suffering of child victims and in the complex activity of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, in close cooperation with United Nations agencies on the ground.

The Security Council will soon initiate consultations on a new draft resolution that should provide clear guidelines for future steps to protect children in situations of armed conflict. I am convinced that, with the resolve and commitment of the members of the Council, the text of the draft resolution will be rapidly agreed on and can be adopted soon.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I, too, should like to welcome you back to the Security Council, Madame. The fact that you have left the warm climes of Santiago for the frigid weather in New York is testimony to the priority which you and your country attach to the important item on children that we are considering today. This item and our debate are ultimately linked to a central purpose of the United Nations Charter: to save succeeding generations — that is, our children — from the scourge of war.

I should also like to thank Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Ms. Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for their comprehensive presentations to us, which will enrich the Council's deliberations and decisions on this item.

As the Council reviews the progress made so far, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for once again presenting a report which is concise and yet comprehensive. The recommendations contained therein merit careful consideration by the Council, and we hope that this will soon be translated into a consensus resolution. We also appreciate unyielding commitment and efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, as well as the role which UNICEF is playing as the lead United Nations agency, to protect children from the disastrous impact of conflicts. I must add that the community of non-governmental organizations, too, has made invaluable contributions. For a sustained and meaningful engagement, particularly with non-State actors, it is important that non-governmental organizations maintain objectivity and pursue a purely humanitarian agenda.

The Secretary-General's report this year covers new ground. Besides listing parties to conflicts on the Council's active agenda that continued to recruit children, it also lists parties to other conflicts not on the Council's agenda. We endorse this approach of what is popularly called "naming and shaming" as a useful tool for securing compliance by the parties. To this end, both the conflicts and the parties to the conflicts should be identified.

The issue of child soldiers has deservedly been addressed extensively in previous reports. There is also a need to highlight other egregious violations and abuses perpetrated against children in conflict situations. The Secretary-General's report this year has devoted a section to an assessment of such violations and abuses.

The central challenge now, as rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General, is to ensure the application of the comprehensive body of international standards which have been adopted. In this context, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes are now an integral part of peacekeeping operations.

Yet, because they are vulnerable to economic and psychological pressures, children are at risk of re-recruitment. Projects providing economic opportunities and educational facilities for demobilized children and their social integration can be useful ways to prevent re-recruitment.

We favour the Secretary-General's proposal to strengthen the monitoring and reporting mechanism. However, rather than create new mechanisms, it would be more effective to enforce the existing operating mechanisms. Moreover, the intergovernmental nature of such mechanisms should be preserved.

Reliable and accurate information is essential for the monitoring and implementation of commitments. The Council may consider the compilation — and regular updating — of a general compendium of statistical data on children affected by armed conflict, including an assessment of violations and abuse of children, and, if possible, those responsible for such violations. This could then be appended to the Secretary-General's annual report.

The collection of such data should be entrusted, where possible, to United Nations country offices, humanitarian teams or peacekeeping missions. A focal point could be created in the Department of Political Affairs to work in close consultations with the Secretary-General's Special Representative so as to coordinate the mainstreaming of child protection into all aspects of peace operations, including DDR.

Tragically, the international community usually becomes engaged with the plight of children at the end of conflicts. There are, by then, fewer children to save, and most have already endured the worst suffering. Our principal endeavour in the Security Council must therefore be to ensure that the protection of children in armed conflict begins before conflicts break out — before wars are fought and the killing and maiming begins. The international community must address the root causes of conflict, which in most cases are socio-economic inequities, systematic ethnic discrimination, denial of human rights and the illegal exploitation of natural resources. The Security Council has a special responsibility in this regard. It has the authority and the capability to create the mechanisms and modalities that can help it to discharge its fundamental and central role of preventing conflict and promoting the pacific settlement of disputes.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Pakistan for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): We are gratified that the presidency of the Council has recognized the importance of the issue of children and armed conflict by placing it on its agenda early in the year. We are honoured that you, Madam, the Foreign Minister of Chile, are presiding over this morning's meeting.

We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund for their important briefings.

The issue of children and armed conflict has been the subject of a number Security Council resolutions. In its most recent resolution on the subject, resolution 1460 (2003), the Security Council calls on, among others, the parties to armed conflict to provide information about steps taken to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers and develop action plans to end child soldier use.

We therefore support the call of the Secretary-General that we must now move towards what he has called an era of application of international standards and norms for the protection of children in armed conflict.

In this connection, there needs to be within the United Nations system — where the roles of relevant United Nations entities are clearly defined — an effective framework for the protection of children involved in armed conflict. Spelling out responsibilities and tasks will be an important step in ensuring that the critical response areas are covered and that duties are not duplicated. The proposals of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict on the development of a monitoring network of organs and bodies in the United Nations serve as a good starting point for identifying and assigning responsibilities based on their competencies and expertise. For its part, the Council should be able to determine its vital enforcement role in the network in a manner that is supportive of the work of other bodies that also have a mandate with regard to the situation of children in armed conflict. In carrying out its role, the Council should set priorities for action and make sure that its work is focused, particularly on areas where results might be tangible and immediately achievable.

An example of a focused task is ensuring that child protection standards are consistently implemented in peacekeeping missions. The Council could also provide guidance in prioritizing countries and conflict areas that would need donor support for long-term community reintegration and rehabilitation. Experience on the ground has shown that when there are not enough resources to sustain disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, the incidence of reprisal is increased and gains in improving the situation of children are wasted because of the lack or inadequacy of follow-through efforts.

The Council should give emphasis to conflict prevention by recognizing the root factors of conflict, in particular the lack of development. In many communities, children involved in armed conflict usually come from areas where basic social services are inadequate. The experience of the Philippines in addressing the development aspects of conflict has been encouraging. Our Comprehensive Programme Framework for Children involved in Armed Conflict, which regards children as zones of peace, includes, as a major component, the integrated delivery of social services such as food security, livelihood programmes, education and health care in order to combat poverty and reduce the incidence of recruitment and exploitation of children in conflict areas. In this respect, the Security Council can be instrumental, through its peacekeeping missions, in ensuring a safe environment that is conducive to the unimpeded and effective delivery of basic social services in conflict areas.

We support the Secretary-General's suggestion on the need systematically to incorporate children's issues into all peace negotiations and peace accords, including conducting a dialogue on child soldiers with parties in conflict.

Drawing again on our own experience, the Philippine Government has benefited from integrating the interests of children in its "Six Paths to Peace", which serves as the general framework for the implementation of the peace process with groups in conflict. Path Five of this framework addresses concerns arising from continuing armed hostilities, namely the rehabilitation needs of war-affected families and communities, and the role of children and youth in peace-building.

Our Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and the Philippine Council for the Welfare of Children provide technical input on various conflict- resolution approaches that prevent and address the occurrence of the exploitation of children and youth in armed conflict.

Any step that the Council decides to take in addressing the situation of children in armed conflict should be based on reliable data and information. A follow-up system and commitments by all parties regarding steps they are taking to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers could be instituted. It is critical that information be gathered systematically and analysed effectively to enable the Council to assess the level of compliance by parties with their obligation to protect children. A database on all violations should strengthen and build on previous measures taken by the Council, and a monitoring process or system along the lines advocated by Brazil could be established for that purpose.

As the film has shown, children are not only our hope for the future; they are also the reality of the present. There are opportunities within the Council's mandate to ensure an environment that protects children and helps them realize their right to live a normal life. The non-governmental organization community has contributed greatly and has expressed its readiness further to assist in this regard. Now is the time to move towards concrete plans of action for children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Philippines for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Holliday (United States of America): Madam President, allow me to welcome you and to thank you for having convened this meeting today. I wish also to thank you for your leadership — and Chile's leadership — on this issue, and also for having shown the compelling film we saw earlier in the meeting.

I should like also to thank Special Representative Otunnu, both for his statement this morning and for the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict. It is very important that the Security Council and our Governments, as Member States, keep the issue of children and armed conflict in our focus.

The United States recognizes the terrible consequences of using children in armed conflict in all

regions of the world. The use of child soldiers is contributing to violence and great suffering. Through children, we know innocence, love, tenderness and hope. They are the benchmarks of humanity. We are measured by how we care for our children, how we nurture and nourish them, educate them and shelter them. It is our duty as members of the Council to do as much as we can to eliminate the tragedy of children in armed conflict.

The Secretary-General's report describes the terrible circumstances where the use of child soldiers continues. My country fully supports the request for all parties listed in the annexes of the report to halt the recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of international obligations.

The child-soldier problem is particularly dire in Burma, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, parts of the Republic of the Congo, Liberia and northern Uganda. To highlight a few of these problem areas, Burma is thought to have the largest number of child soldiers in the world. Human Rights Watch recently documented the widespread forced recruitment of boys as young as 11 by Burma's national army. Many are forced to fight against armed ethnic opposition groups and to carry out human rights abuses such as rounding up villagers for forced labour, burning houses and even attacking civilians.

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers recently reported that children may account for 35 to 45 per cent of new recruits into the national army and for 70,000 or more of Burma's estimated 350,000 soldiers. Child soldiers are also used in ethnic armies.

We encourage Burma's neighbours to provide protection to any child soldiers who desert from the national or ethnic armies and to allow international relief organizations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), to provide assistance to resettle and reintegrate them into society.

Colombia's children have long been affected by that country's devastating conflict, including some 11,000 who are currently fighting in irregular armies, including paramilitary and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrilla forces. Boys and girls, some as young as 10 years old, are often recruited forcibly and used as combatants, spies, messengers, porters, kidnappers, guards, cooks, sexual companions or slaves, even for placing and removing bombs. Girls in guerrilla and paramilitary groups are particularly at risk of sexual abuse.

In Côte d'Ivoire, armed forces continue to recruit young Liberians from refugee camps in the western part of the country. Equally as tragic, Congolese armed forces continue to have children in their ranks, despite commitments to demobilization. Charles Taylor, Liberia's former President, stepped down in August, and, on one positive note, shortly after Taylor's departure, 80 ex-child soldiers who had been fighting in the ranks of either Government or opposition forces were under the care of the United Nations in Monrovia, and we salute the efforts of the United Nations in Liberia. There is still a great deal more to be done in that country, however.

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has waged a civil war against the Government of Uganda since the mid-1980s. UNICEF estimates that between June 2002 and May 2003, the LRA abducted 8,400 children from northern Uganda to serve as soldiers. UNICEF also estimates that during the past 16 years of fighting, more than 14,000 children have been abducted by the LRA. The United Nations estimates that an average of 20 children are abducted on a daily basis.

Children are forced to participate in acts of extreme violence and are often compelled to help beat or hack to death fellow child captives who have attempted to escape. Girls as young as 12 are given to commanders as de facto wives. Some abducted children have managed to escape, while others have died from disease, mistreatment or combat wounds.

Although I have specifically mentioned only six Governments that need to take immediate action to eliminate the use of child soldiers, the other Governments mentioned in the Secretary-General's report that harbour child soldiers must also take action. Of course, I have also mentioned, in addition to Governments, armed groups that have perpetrated these horrible acts.

The United States fully supports the following measures: a specific request by the Council that the Secretary-General submit another list to the Security Council next year naming all Governments and armed groups that illegally recruit and use child soldiers, not just in countries that are currently on the Council's agenda; active monitoring of Governments and armed groups that have already been named; and direct dialogue with the Governments and armed groups

concerned by the Council or the Secretary-General in order to develop action plans to eliminate the use of child soldiers.

Again, a positive note: the number of States parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict continues to increase. This past year realized an increase of 21, to a total of 66 States parties, demonstrating important leadership on the effort to end the phenomenon of child soldiers.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report and are reviewing its specific recommendations closely. We look forward to working with the other Council members on a closer review of the report. Last week's Arria-style meeting, under the leadership of Ambassador de La Sablière, was a solid step in that direction.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the United States for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a pleasure for me, Madam, to see you presiding over the Council today. The fact that you chose this day to do so is clear evidence of your personal commitment, and that of your country, to ending the tragedy of children in armed conflict.

My country wishes to associate itself with the statement to be made by the European Union.

I should like to begin by acknowledging the work of Mr. Otunnu. His tireless efforts, dedication and commitment deserve praise.

The fact that we are meeting today to consider the question of children and armed conflict bears witness to the primary importance the Council attaches to the problem. That is in itself both a positive and, regrettably, negative fact. It is positive because it demonstrates the international community's high level of awareness of the issue. It is negative because at the same time it is a sign that the problem persists, that we have not be able to resolve it and that, in certain respects, the problem has even worsened.

That is not due to a lack of legal or institutional structures. Both exist. But, unfortunately, we have not been able to apply them fully. Precisely for that reason, it seems to us that the most appropriate course of action now is to focus on how to act effectively to achieve that implementation of existing instruments. In that respect, we believe that we can concentrate on the following areas.

The first is the area of action. Without doubt, the recruitment of children into armed groups is one of the key areas. But it is not the only one. Other aspects should also be included, such as the killing and maiming of children, their abduction and forced displacement, obstacles to children's access to humanitarian assistance and to education, and sexual violence, in particular against girls — as noted by the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Ms. Bellamy, whose work I applaud. The gender perspective is essential and must never be forgotten.

Secondly, the existence of the lists is certainly an important element. They constitute the core of a necessary policy of deterrence and ending impunity. However, the lists must be widely accepted in order to be truly effective. Therefore, the criteria for the inclusion of groups in the lists — or their exclusion — must be studied in detail.

The third element is monitoring and reporting. As Mr. Otunnu indicated, these activities must be carried out, evaluated and communicated precisely and quickly with a view to taking decisions and taking action. The system must be strengthened at its roots, in other words on the ground. To do so, above all, the performance of the child protection advisers should be evaluated, and the participation of local communities and non-governmental organizations in the mechanism should be encouraged from the start.

The fourth element is coordination among the various bodies of the United Nations system. There should be complete consistency from activities in the field through to the level of Headquarters, where the role of the Special Representative is essential. At the same time, we should continue the policy of including the question of children and armed conflict both in the reports of the Secretary-General on specific situations and in the mandates of peacekeeping operations.

With those elements, it should be possible to elaborate in a fixed period of time — for example, four, five or six months — specific plans of action that propose concrete measures to put an end to this tragedy of the twenty-first century.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Spain for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): We are happy, Madam President, that you are with us today. I am very much aware of the honour paid to us by your presence in the Chair for this important debate. I also thank Mr. Olara Otunnu and Ms. Carol Bellamy for their briefings, which have enlightened our debate. After the video that we saw at the beginning of this meeting, it is obviously difficult to resort to mere platitudes. We must at least try to live up to the strong, simple messages that those bruised children addressed to us. The suffering of a child caught in the maelstrom of a war waged by adults is always unacceptable. But the fact that that child could be exploited or used in war and that this suffering could go on in a disturbing climate of impunity is, of course, repugnant. It is indeed a scandal that the international community must not tolerate.

That, I think, is the meaning of United Nations initiatives taken in recent years in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations, which in this and other areas have played a pioneering role. I welcome this unanimous commitment of the Security Council, which enables us to go ever further in condemning and fighting impunity.

This mobilization goes beyond the Security Council. It was thanks to the commitment of the entire international community that we were able to adopt the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits the recruitment of minors, and to include in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court specific provisions on the recruitment and use of child soldiers, which are defined as war crimes.

The two latest resolutions adopted by the Council on this item take note of and welcome those normative steps and establish the Council's own follow-up mechanism. As we all know, resolution 1379 (2001), adopted on 20 November 2001, the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, created a black list of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use child soldiers in violation of their international obligations. Resolution 1460 (2003) of January 2002 continues that list and extends its scope. It opens the way to targeted sanctions against the perpetrators. At a more operational level, closely connected to the work of the Council, it provides for a more systematic inclusion of the protection of children in the planning of peacekeeping or peace-building operations.

In brief, today we have a full arsenal of norms. And I do not think we need to be ashamed of our record. But the fact that, despite the progress on regulations and despite the political pressure of repeated denunciation and systematic naming and shaming, the reality on the ground remains very grim. This morning, Mr. Otunnu and Ms. Bellamy recalled for the Council this reality and its statistics. It is as if all those who violated international laws on the protection of children in armed conflict were saying to themselves, "In the end, New York is a long way away", and that the decisions made in our glass tower hardly concern them.

I do not think we can accept that state of affairs. The question now is clear: what can we do to make progress in the implementation of the norms at our disposal? There are many proposals on the table, including the proposals of the Secretary-General in his fourth report to the Council. Here again I welcome the role played by my friend Olara Otunnu and his team, as well as the role of Carol Bellamy and her colleagues in UNICEF. Their experience on the ground is indispensable. We also have the proposals of the non-governmental organizations with which we met last week and which shared with us their analyses and suggestions, which I found very interesting.

Those proposals are many and varied, and — I repeat — they are unanimous on one point: today we do not need new norms; we need action. We need implementation, particularly concrete implementation on the ground. That message has been understood by my delegation, which last week submitted a draft resolution to our partners on the Security Council. Negotiations should get under way tomorrow, following our debate, and I hope that we shall be able to adopt the text, under the enlightened presidency of Ambassador Muñoz, by the end of January.

I should like to say a few words about what are essentially our objectives in submitting this text. First of all, as I just emphasized, we must establish a proper monitoring mechanism on the ground that will enable us to assess very precisely progress with regard to every armed group that the report of the Secretary-General lists as recruiting and using child soldiers.

Such a mechanism, which will involve the competent United Nations actors already present on the ground, will enable the Council, on the basis of precise, reliable information, to decide on actions to be taken.

Then — and this is an important point, since the sufferings endured by children in armed conflicts are not limited to their enrolment in armed forces — we must take into account all the grave violations of children's rights in conflict areas. Such violations also include kidnapping, mutilation, sexual violence and attacks against schools and hospitals.

Another element to which we attach particular importance relates to encouraging action by regional organizations to protect children in armed conflicts. Two recent initiatives that we think should be welcomed are that of the Economic Community of West African States, which, in Dakar in September 2003, created a peer review mechanism, and that of the European Union, which in December adopted guidelines on children in armed conflict. My colleague the representative of Ireland, who will speak later on behalf of the European Union, will touch upon that important initiative. Needless to say, I totally support his statement.

No member of the Council, I believe, can fail to subscribe to those objectives, even if there may be some differences regarding their practical implementation. Therefore, we hope that it will be possible to swiftly reach agreement on the draft resolution by the end of the month.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of France for the kind words he addressed to me.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): Let me begin by thanking you, Madam President, for providing us with the opportunity of this debate. Your presence underlines your personal commitment and that of Chile to this very important issue. I should like to join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2003/1053) and for the work of his Special Representative. I am thankful also for the work of the many organizations involved — especially the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations — for all their contributions. I should like to associate myself with the remarks to be made later by the Irish Presidency of the European Union.

Today's debate on children and armed conflict is very important for my Government, as for others around this table. It is an issue that causes the United Kingdom to work hard to support, at all levels in the United Nations system and beyond, the efforts made to arrest this grim problem. As today's interventions show, children and armed conflict is a highly complex issue, intertwining political, legal, social and institutional issues. But we have an obligation to find answers and to resolve those issues on behalf of children.

Today we have heard two simple messages. The first is about the history that underpins the consideration of this issue in the United Nations. That provides a benchmark for measuring the progress that has been made, and we should be pleased about that progress. But the second message is self-evident: we are still not doing enough. Even as we speak, children throughout the world continue to suffer. It is time to focus on results and on action.

Graça Machel's study (A/51/306), submitted in 1996, was a watershed — a watershed for the United Nations and for the international system's consideration of children and armed conflict. That study set out in very explicit terms — which are every bit as relevant today — the impact of conflict on children's lives. It remains a touchstone for our collective effort to improve the lives of children in conflict regions.

We have made commendable progress. At the international level, in 2003 we recognized and applauded the establishment of a strengthened normative framework for the protection of children in armed conflict. The Secretary-General then rightly called for — and Mr. Otunnu this morning emphasized the need for — an era of application. But today, as we engage in this debate, others have expressed — and let me repeat — the extreme regret that, at the national level in many situations today, we have barely scratched the surface of this challenge.

In Burma, it is estimated that up to 70,000 children, some as young as 11, are forcibly recruited by the State army, where they are used in armed conflict. Children also suffer abuse inflicted by ethnic armed groups. In northern Uganda, we continue to witness a situation that deserves a far higher profile: the horrific kidnapping of children by the Lord's Resistance Army. These children are used to beat and kill civilians, to

kidnap other children and to fight against government forces. The further tragedy is that these children — intimidated, forced to take such actions — have nowhere to go. They are rejected by their families and their communities because of those actions and are increasingly locked into a cycle of terror. Ms. Bellamy already referred to the situation in West and Central Africa, among other areas.

I was quite horrified when, in a discussion at the end of last week, someone referred in very matter-of-fact terms to a colonel aged 17. The logic of that was inevitable: if your privates are all aged 10 to 12, by the time they are promoted, they can become colonels at 17. A harsher indictment I cannot imagine. Situations like those, in which thousands of children suffer egregious violations of their rights on a daily basis, must be the focus of our highest priority and of our actions.

Such situations stand in stark contrast to the internal disturbance in Northern Ireland — covered in the report — where there is not and has not been a situation of armed conflict and where, in addition, there has been real progress in addressing the issue of children's rights. In addition to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, there is now a Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland with a broad remit and significant powers to ensure the protection of children's interests. Those developments take place against the background of an established and increasingly successful political process.

When we come to this debate next year, we need to be talking about tangible, positive outcomes for children in conflict regions. To do that, as others have said, we now need to establish a plan detailing practical steps to achieve measurable progress by the time the next report is written.

Last month, when the Security Council debated the protection of civilians in armed conflict, I set out three interconnected themes that, in our view, the United Nations system should collectively address, and they are just as relevant to today's debate.

First, we must end abuse. We should establish incentives and define what actions perpetrators should take to end their abuse of children, including by setting out indicators for progress and the consequences of inaction.

Secondly, knowledge: we need to know about the situation on the ground and the responses that we are getting to the incentives that we provide. That is what we understand by effective monitoring, reporting and evaluation: knowing the outcomes and assessing the situation against the objectives of the international community and the basic rights of children.

Thirdly, we need action to tackle continuing abuse through an effective United Nations system-wide response, working with Governments and civil society organizations, with the right people in the right place with the right skills at the right time. This is what we mean by "mainstreaming", a dimension which we should, as a matter of course, cover in Security Council resolutions addressing conflict and post-conflict situations.

An institutional road map should set out who should do what and when, and then set out core responsibilities. Changing the way things are done can sometimes pose tough questions, but we can no longer afford to duck them, so we require vision and strong and effective leadership at all levels. That is why we strongly support the Secretary-General's assessment of response to children in armed conflict the United Nations system as a whole. If our debate next year is to focus on those tangible outcomes for children, it is vital that the report before us today lead to concrete actions at all levels.

Member States have a responsibility as well, a responsibility to ensure that we provide sufficient human and financial resources to support disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programmes that address the very specific and challenging needs of child soldiers, including their education. My Government stands ready to offer its support.

Finally, I am struck that Graça Machel's words in 1996 remain as relevant now as they were then. Describing her report as a call to action, she said:

> "It is unforgivable that children are assaulted, violated, murdered and yet our conscience is not revolted nor our sense of dignity challenged. This represents a fundamental crisis of our civilization. The impact of armed conflict on children must be everyone's concern and is everyone's responsibility — Governments, international organizations and every element of civil society. ...

> "Let us transform our moral outrage into concrete action. Our children have a right to peace". ... (A/51/306)

That message should underpin our work.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): Madam President, let me first of all, like other speakers, welcome you to the chair of this discussion. It shows the importance that you attach to this issue under discussion in the Council, and we appreciate that very much.

In this debate almost exactly one year ago, I spoke about helpless outrage at unimaginable atrocities being a common feature of our age. I also mentioned that this Council, with the powers vested in it by the United Nations Charter, is one of the few bodies that does not have to confine itself to helpless outrage. One year later, we have arrived at a crucial juncture, and I will come back to that in a moment.

But first, let me express our heartfelt thanks to the Ambassador of France, Jean-Marc de La Sablière, and his delegation for their strong leadership on this issue. No other delegation has done more to put this issue of child protection, especially the issue of child soldiering, high on the Council's agenda. I would like to assure you, Mr. Ambassador, that we will again be enthusiastic supporters of your efforts to pass a new Council resolution that will be even stronger than resolution 1460 (2003), a resolution that, in the words of Olara Otunnu this morning, will, hopefully, serve as "triggers for action".

We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Otunnu, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Carol Bellamy, for their opening remarks and the work they have done so far to advance the protection of children associated with armed conflict. The cooperation between UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General was excellent on the child protection component of the United Nations mission to Liberia, and we hope that this will serve as a model for future cooperation.

I would also like to state that Germany fully associates itself with the statement to be delivered by Ambassador Ryan of Ireland, on behalf of the European Union, later in this discussion.

In January of last year, adopted a resolution that was widely seen as a sign of hope for the hundreds of thousands of child soldiers and many more children victimized by armed conflict, because the Council had gone further than ever before, not only in condemning outrages against children but also in taking tangible action against these crimes.

One year later, we feel a mixture of hope and frustration. On the positive side, we see some encouraging action within the United Nations system and by non-governmental organizations to use resolution 1460 (2003) as a strong advocacy tool. On the other hand, we see little overall improvement on the ground. Instances where there was some positive development — for example, in Sri Lanka — are rare. And there are the many instances where there was no positive development at all, or even a worsening of the situation, for example in northern Uganda, in Ituri in north-eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in Myanmar.

On a more hopeful note, we are starting to see a positive impact from the threat of prosecution by the International Criminal Court (ICC). In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, this possibility is becoming more and more widely known. We are convinced that the ICC is, even now, exerting its much-desired preventive influence, and we are equally convinced that it will play a highly important role in ending the culture of impunity. However, this must not stop the Council from using its own powers to hold accountable those responsible for the gravest crimes and human rights violations.

The Council has now arrived at a crossroads; we now have to decide whether we want to continue to appeal, condemn and entreat, or to act. We strongly advocate for the latter option. We must not allow this debate to become an annual ritual of hand-wringing indignation without measurable effect.

Many excellent recommendations have been made by the Secretary-General and by many non-governmental organizations. These range from more systematic monitoring and reporting, to curbing the flow of small arms and the illicit exploitation of natural resources, to more child-sensitive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programming.

We would like to focus on the following key issues, which should also be important elements of the draft resolution we will hopefully adopt shortly.

First, we must reinforce the Council's message to unresponsive parties to conflicts that they have to meet their obligations. We should set clear time limits for action plans for demobilization and child protection.

Secondly, we must take action that makes it clearer who is in charge of what within the United Nations system. United Nations action must be made more cohesive. In concrete terms, we support the suggestion to appoint a United Nations focal point at the country level to make clear to all actors in the field who is responsible. We also support changes at Headquarters that ensure that this agenda becomes a true joint effort. We are looking forward to the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations response to this issue.

Thirdly, conflict parties that do respond positively should be rewarded with technical and other assistance. Conflict parties that do not comply, however, should be penalized. Such measures, both positive and negative, must be targeted. We strongly support the Secretary-General's recommendations, inter alia, on travel restrictions, restrictions on the supply of arms and on other military assistance. We know that targeted measures are a highly complex and politically charged issue. However, we should not continue to treat this as a taboo subject in the Council. Otherwise, we will never be able to arrive at a methodology that excludes exactly those feared side-effects that lead sceptics in the Council to oppose them in the first place. And let me address myself to my more sceptical colleagues: Let us not forget what we are addressing here. We are facing some of the most vicious crimes imaginable, committed on a large scale.

Fourthly, the Council should enhance its efforts to integrate child-protection issues into its deliberations on concrete conflict situations. There is no conflict that does not affect children. Therefore, every conflict on the Council's agenda should be examined from a child-rights perspective. For instance, when a peace mission is established, we should ask ourselves: What are the requirements for child protection? Do we need child-protection advisers? What are the requirements for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement programmes from a child-protection perspective? What are the special needs of girls? The Council has been making progress here, but our job of mainstreaming is far from complete.

Lastly, we continue to need a list of violators annexed to the Secretary-General's report to the Council. We also believe that the call for an extension of this list to other egregious violations is justified. Let me make one point to illustrate this. One of the most shocking developments in recent conflicts is the appalling prevalence of sexual violence, as so vividly described by Carol Bellamy just this morning. Systematic rape as a weapon of war, often combined with murder and mutilation, as well as contemporary forms of slavery — especially the abduction of children as sex slaves — are not covered by the current list. The vast majority of victims of these crimes are girls. An extension of the list to other violations would not only give us a more accurate picture, but would also help to heighten our awareness of the gender aspects of this issue.

Although it is not easy in this context, let me end on a positive note. Despite all the obstacles, Germany does believe that the Council can make a real difference. The Council is united in its condemnation of the illegal recruitment of children and the unspeakable acts committed against them in armed conflict. Very importantly, we are being supported by a number of first-class non-governmental organizations, in particular the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. In addition, we are being supported by highly committed individuals in the United Nations system. In short, we have reached a critical mass and can now really move things forward. Let us seize this opportunity together.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Germany for his kind words addressed to me and to the presidency.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I wish to welcome you to New York, Madame, to preside personally over today's meeting. Your presence fully demonstrates the great importance which your country, Chile, and you yourself attach to the issue of children and armed conflict. Your commitment will undoubtedly play a very important role in the efforts of the Security Council, the United Nations and all countries.

I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict, as well as Special Representative Otunnu and Carol Bellamy for their briefings. They have made most valuable

recommendations that merit the Council's attentive consideration.

There is a common understanding that children represent the future of the world. We are duty-bound to create the best and most conducive conditions in which they may live, study, develop, grow and succeed. Regrettably, however, millions of children in today's world continue to suffer the damage caused by armed conflict. They live through turbulence and backwardness, they witness violence and destruction, they suffer abuse and injury, and they inherit tragedy and helplessness.

It is therefore a most important duty of the international community to protect children from the damage of armed conflict and all countries, especially parties to conflicts, should make every effort to that end. We are very pleased to note that, in recent years, the United Nations has adopted a series of measures to protect children in armed conflict and achieved positive results. The Security Council has adopted resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003), which provide a very important legal framework for the work of child protection. United Nations peacekeeping operations in certain areas have mandated child protection — including the appointment of child protection advisers and the recognition of the special needs of children — as a key task in assisting the countries where they are deployed to carry out disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement programmes. Some peace agreements promoted by or achieved with the assistance of the United Nations also contain child-protection provisions. All such measures have, to a certain extent, mitigated the harm caused by armed conflict to children and should therefore be welcomed.

Although the international community has attached growing importance in recent years to the protection of children in armed conflict and has achieved progress on this issue, we must and can make genuine efforts to effect real change in the situation. In this context, I wish to stress the following points.

First, all parties to armed conflict should implement in good faith their obligations under relevant international law in order to safeguard the rights of children. All those who have participated in killing, abducting or abusing children should be severely punished according to the law. The coercive recruitment and deployment of child soldiers must be stopped.

Secondly, in post-conflict countries and regions, the authorities concerned must solve the problem of returning children to their families, schools and society as a matter of priority and provide adequate and guaranteed resources to that end. The international community should also actively provide assistance to that end.

Thirdly, the Security Council should continue to intensify its efforts to prevent and put an end to conflict, in keeping with its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The relevant departments within the United Nations should, in a timely manner, provide an overview of successful experiences in protecting children in peacekeeping operations for use in future operations.

China believes that the United Nations should play an active role in protecting children in armed conflict. We agree that the United Nations and the relevant regional organizations and agencies of the United Nations system should intensify their cooperation and coordination efforts with a view to adopting an integrated strategy so that, working together, they can help countries in conflict to enhance their ability to protect children.

China will continue to work together with the international community to promote the cause of the protection of children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Chile.

I would like to thank representatives for their kind expressions of support addressed to the presidency. My presence in this Chamber attests to the priority that Chile attaches to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, both male and female, in armed conflict.

We associate ourselves with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of Mali, which holds the chairmanship of the Human Security Network, of which Chile, together with 12 other countries, is a member.

It is hard to imagine that more than 300,000 boys and girls are still participating in armed conflict in various regions of the world. That is a fundamental

challenge to the values that should govern the world. It is our responsibility to continue to work for the restoration of human dignity and to take the necessary measures for the immediate demobilization, rehabilitation and reinsertion of those boys and girls. That is a task to be carried out jointly by Governments, the United Nations system and civil society.

This is why we attach particular importance to the report of the Secretary-General. We welcome his recommendations and firmly support the appeals for action made by his Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and by the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Ms. Carol Bellamy.

The Security Council acknowledged its responsibility when, in 1998, it included this item on its agenda. As the Secretary-General has said, the time has come for the implementation of international instruments and resolutions to protect children.

We also have a responsibility to expand the concept of early warning so as to identify situations that threaten international peace and security. Our challenge is to act before, during and after conflict. We must commit ourselves to the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Security Council in recent years.

We believe that, if we are to succeed in ensuring the full implementation of the legal framework to protect children in armed conflict, we must seek out and develop effective monitoring and information mechanisms that enable us to oversee such implementation in a more systematic manner.

In this context, it may be useful to recall the proposal that we made in the context of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. We suggested that every year a member of the Council should be requested to monitor, together with the relevant departments of the Secretariat, the implementation of our decisions. A similar initiative was suggested by some non-governmental organizations during the recent Arria-formula meeting in relation to children in armed conflict.

In the context of our monitoring efforts, the identification of parties to conflict that recruit or use children should be kept under constant review. We must also consider monitoring other forms of violation and abuse of children.

After the parties that perpetrate such abuses have been identified, it will then be time to begin work on the nature of the measures or sanctions to be imposed on them, particularly in the case of repeat offenders in the use or recruitment of children as soldiers.

We are convinced that education is one of the key instruments for promoting lasting protection for children — a conviction that is shared by the members of the Human Security Network.

We must design and implement policies and programmes geared towards both the therapeutic healing of the physical and psychological damage done to children who have been abused and the restoration of the rights that were violated in situations of war and armed conflict.

I invite representatives to expand the global movement seeking to ensure that the rights of children in armed conflicts are included, as a matter of priority, on the international security agenda and in development policies at both the national and international levels.

Specifically, my country proposes that we concentrate on the following areas: first, the establishment of a structured monitoring and information mechanism; secondly, the adoption of specific measures aimed at violator countries, as well as repeat offenders; thirdly, the inclusion in our future work of other serious violations; and fourthly, an emphasis on educational policies to facilitate reintegration into society.

I wish to conclude, as earlier speakers have done, by recalling the words of Graça Machel, who appealed to us to take advantage of this and every opportunity to transform our moral outrage into proactive strategies for change. Let us fulfil our obligations to ourselves and to the future: our children — our boys and girls — who have the right to enjoy peace.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Colombia, on whom I now call.

Mr. Giraldo (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express our appreciation to you, Madam, for having honoured us by presiding over this Security Council meeting. We would also like to thank

Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

In expressing gratitude to the mission of Chile for having organized this debate, and to the Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict, my delegation would like to share the experiences of our country and our Government in the difficult task of protecting Colombian children, who have been murdered, kidnapped, mutilated, displaced or recruited by the illegal armed groups that operate in the country.

Allow me to begin with what I consider an absolutely key priority. While it is true that all violations against children's rights must be singled out for repudiation, it is important to bear in mind that, in situations of armed conflict, the worst, most systematic and extensive violations of those rights — those with the most profound effects — are perpetrated by illegal armed groups that recruit child soldiers.

Child soldiers, because of their status, are in particular danger of being killed, tortured or mutilated — in short, mistreated in every way. Their rights and freedoms are severely restricted, as is their ability to develop their personalities. They are taken away from their families and become victims of sexual abuse.

That is why the United Nations, the Council, the Secretary-General and all of us here should be more explicit in condemning these practices. Drawing up lists on an annual basis, disseminating them and sharing them among all the Members of the United Nations — so as to ensure that everyone bears these facts very much in mind when having any kind of contact with these types of groups, or when receiving them on their territory — would be one way of exerting moral and global pressure, so that such groups might begin to believe it necessary to put an end to these practices.

The Secretary-General's report indicates that 7,000 Colombian children have been recruited by illegal armed groups — that is to say, one of every four irregular combatants in Colombia is under 18. According to estimates by Colombian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 80 per cent of the children in question belong to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) or to the National Liberation Army (ELN). Thirty-five per cent of the children recruited — most of them by force — desert before a year is up. Many have been executed when trying to escape by their own friends, who are also children.

The extreme gravity of the situation is reflected in a Human Rights Watch report which recalls the sad and horrifying testimony of a girl child soldier talking about the execution of her best friend when he tried to escape:

> "I cannot forget Luis; he was my friend. I voted for his execution so the others would not think that I had a chicken's heart."

Concerning the behaviour of these illegal armed groups, Human Rights Watch stresses that, first, they train the children to have no mercy; secondly, they torture and summarily execute children for not doing the work required of them; and, thirdly, they induce children to take part in atrocities. One tragic example is that of a boy, only 10 years old, used by the FARC to deliver a bomb. He was killed on 17 April 2003, when the bicycle he was riding exploded.

But the acts of terror perpetrated by Colombian irregular armed groups against children in my country is not limited to recruiting child soldiers and executing them if they try to escape, nor to sacrificing them in the perpetration of terrorist acts. As the Secretary-General's report states,

> "In Colombia, the Ejercito de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) have kidnapped hundreds of children for ransom and as a means of terrorizing civilian populations; 215 children were kidnapped in 2002 and another 112 during the first half of 2003." (*S/2003/1053, para. 34*)

According to State statistics, between 1996 and 2003, 1,819 children aged 13 to 17 were kidnapped. According to some statistics, every 37 hours in Colombia a child is kidnapped by an illegal armed group. The Secretary-General also reports in paragraph 44 of his report that "in Colombia, about 40 per cent of mine victims from 1990 to 2003 were children".

Furthermore, with reference to illegal armed groups, the Secretary-General notes in paragraph 55 that "fear of recruitment has led many families to flee their homes in rural areas". According to official Colombian Government data, 58 per cent of displaced persons are children and women. Many of those children end up in cities as street children and are

sometimes the victims of arbitrary killings. In this regard, we would like to know the sources consulted that allow the Secretary-General to affirm in paragraph 25 of his report that there has been an increase in the number of arbitrary killings of street children. Indeed, we have statistics to the contrary, given that the combat against these heinous crimes has been one of the priorities of my country's national and local authorities.

I did not come here only to comment and expand on the denunciations in the Secretary-General's report of all the atrocities committed against Colombian children by the irregular armed groups operating in my country. I am also here to inform the Council about our commitment and the results of the democratic security policy of our Government to protect the human rights of all Colombians, and in particular those of our children.

The incidence of homicide, kidnapping and displacement has begun to decrease, and there has been an important increase in the number of desertions by persons linked to illegal armed groups, especially minors. In 2003, 64 per cent of the demobilized were between 14 and 24.

Since 1999, the Colombian State has been complying with its international commitments not to recruit children under the age of 18. Colombia therefore would request institutions and entities with the required influence — such as the Security Council, regional organizations and States — to exert gradual and targeted pressure on those armed groups that continue to violate the rights of Colombian children.

Perhaps the Colombian children who, in an environment of violence, had the courage to create the "Children's Movement for Peace in Colombia", as well as those children worldwide whose rights have been violated, could serve as examples of the courage that we all must have if we are to rescue them from the hell they are experiencing at the hands of violent groups.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Colombia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Myanmar, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): I wish to thank you, Madam President, for having convened this event and for the opportunity to participate in it. I wish also to thank Mr. Olara Otunnu and Ms. Bellamy for their presentations.

The last five years have seen significant gains in the protection of children affected by armed conflict, with milestone achievements in the area of awareness and advocacy as well as in the strengthening of international norms and standards.

Children have now been placed solidly on the international peace and security agenda. However, the report also shows that children continue to be the main victims of conflict.

My delegation has always held the view that the best way of protecting children in armed conflict lies in the promotion of conflict prevention and resolution. In conditions of armed conflict, it is the most vulnerable in a society that suffer — that is to say, women and children.

My country, since its independence in 1948, has suffered from civil insurgency. It is only recently that the country was able to enjoy the fruits of peace and stability. Until recently, there were 18 armed insurgent groups, of which 17 have now come back to the legal fold. Only one insurgent group — the Karen National Union (KNU) — remains outside the fold. I am happy to tell the Council that the Government has been successfully carrying out confidence-building measures with this remaining group. Guns have now fallen silent throughout the Union of Myanmar.

The issue of children and armed conflict is one that demands the undivided attention of the international community. It is an issue on which all of us must cooperate and work together to alleviate the tragic plight of children everywhere.

During the public meeting last year one Security Council member stressed the need for verification and for checking the validity of information before it is presented to the Security Council, as have many speakers during today's debate. My delegation also stated that the issue of the protection of children should not be politicized. Despite that, I have noted that the Secretary-General's report has taken as facts allegations made regarding my country by certain quarters to put political pressure on Myanmar.

We take the issue of the protection of children very seriously, and I personally have been in contact with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, in this regard. I am

personally thankful to Mr. Otunnu for the useful interaction with him regarding this issue. I was also given to understand that the preparation of the report as far as Myanmar was concerned was very political and that the discussions were sometimes even acrimonious. Last year, a number of non-governmental organizations exerted tremendous pressure to include Myanmar on the annex list. At that time, the Secretary-General, guided by resolution 1379 (2001), resisted the attempt.

However, we regret that in preparing this year's report, although it was prepared under the same guidelines, a second annex was created, and that Tatmadaw Kyi — the Myanmar army — was included in annex II. It must be noted here that Myanmar is not a country in armed conflict. The report, without checking or verification, used second-hand information provided by politically motivated non-governmental organizations to include Tatmadaw Kyi in the list. The preposterous allegation of 70,000 child soldiers made against us is the result of interviewing 20 or so insurgents and dubious deserters inside a neighbouring country. No United Nations agency — I repeat: no United Nations agency — in Myanmar has verified this allegation. As is widely known, and as is testified to by the Special Rapporteur on human rights, it is the practice of insurgent groups to recruit and use child soldiers.

May I reiterate once again that the Myanmar armed forces, including Tatmadaw Kyi, is an all-volunteer army, and those entering military service do so of their own free will. Under the Myanmar Defence Services Act and War Office Council instruction 13/73 of 1974, a person cannot enlist in the armed forces until he has attained the age of 18. There is neither a draft system nor forced conscription by the Government of Myanmar. Forced conscription in any form is strictly prohibited. And in order to ensure the voluntary nature of recruitment, as well as the minimum age requirement, the Ministry of Defence has followed up with periodic instructions. Those who are found to have contravened those instructions have had action taken against them under military law. We have instituted scrutiny and inspection procedures and have demobilized those military personnel who do not conform to minimum age requirements or other qualifications.

To further strengthen effective implementation, a committee for the prevention of the recruitment of child soldiers has been recently established, chaired by the Second Secretary of the State Peace and Development Council, Lieutenant General Thein Sein. The committee also decided to set up a task force comprising representatives from relevant ministries. In order to more effectively address the issue, the Committee will also draw up a plan of action. Necessary procedures to be followed for preventing all recruitment of under-age children are already in place.

Myanmar shares the view of the rest of the international community on the need to protect children, particularly in situations of armed conflict. We are also of the view that the promotion of all human rights, including the rights of children, should be conducted through cooperation. We have therefore invited the Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, to visit Myanmar at a mutually convenient time, and the Special Representative has indicated his intention to visit Myanmar in early 2004. We are now waiting for him to propose the actual dates. We have also indicated our willingness to cooperate with UNICEF to its representative in Myanmar.

With the attainment of peace and stability, the Government has been able to bring considerable economic and social development to the country, in particular to the inhabitants of the border areas, which until recently had been under the control of the insurgents. Children in those areas are now provided with the health and education services that are enjoyed by their brethren in other parts of the country. Nationally, we will continue to promote the well-being of children and provide them with a secure and enabling environment in which they can develop their full potential. We are also resolved to join hands with others in the international community to promote the rights of children the world over.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kulyk (Ukraine): At the outset, Madam, I would like to express appreciation for the excellent manner in which you are presiding over the work of the Security Council. Let me thank you and the delegation of Chile for convening this important meeting.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his substantive report (S/2003/1053). Ukraine also congratulates his Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Carol Bellamy, on their tremendous work in the interest of children.

Since the first consideration of this issue by the Security Council with the participation of Ukraine, in 1998, we have made certain progress in this field. Four Security Council resolutions formed a strong basis for advocacy on behalf of war-affected children. The scope of international instruments has been strengthened and expanded. Among them is the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. I am pleased to inform the Council that two weeks ago the President of Ukraine submitted the Optional Protocol to the Ukrainian parliament for ratification.

However, success in standard-setting must not be cause for complacency — quite the contrary. While the existing standards are high, the picture continues to be very grim when it comes to implementation on the ground.

Ukraine reiterates its support for the Security Council's efforts to reinforce the protection of children. We emphasize the innovative contribution that resolutions 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003) represent, particularly the publication of a list of parties to armed conflicts that recruit or use children in violation of international law. The political importance of this list is undeniable, and it should certainly be maintained. However, its true value will become apparent only when the Security Council defines the actions it needs to undertake in that respect. We support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to the Council to take concrete steps where insufficient or no progress has been made by parties in implementing resolutions 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003).

As we see from the report, the list of Governments and armed groups using children in armed conflicts has now become much longer than it was a year ago, and the assessment of progress made by those parties during the same year is very modest. Frankly speaking, I am not sure that every group named in the list has been made aware of the fact of its publication.

It is incumbent upon all of us to move away from general statements to specific action and to build a system of accountability that cannot be ignored. In that regard, as Mr. Otunnu rightly pointed out, we need a systematic, integrated and concerted monitoring and reporting mechanism to provide timely and accurate information on violations of the rights of children in armed conflicts.

Who should undertake this monitoring and reporting? In our opinion, it should be a network of actors, each of whom would bring the added value represented by their respective areas of jurisdiction, competence and expertise. Those actors include the Security Council, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, United Nations peacekeeping missions and country teams and other United Nations agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations. I believe we can create a global culture that will hold anyone to account who uses or abuses children or destroys them and their innocence, as one would hold anyone to account who uses weapons of mass destruction.

Peacekeeping missions have a crucial role to play in providing protection for children. Ukraine continues to advocate the deployment of child protection advisers in peacekeeping missions in order to effectively integrate the rights, protection and well-being of children into peacekeeping and peace-building processes. We especially appreciate the fact that child protection advisers are already being deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Angola. In addition, the training of both military and civilian peacekeeping personnel in child protection and children's rights should be undertaken in every peacekeeping mission.

When designing peacekeeping operations, the Security Council should make every effort to protect both children and their supporting environment: schools, hospitals, health centres and religious institutions. Once child soldiers have been rescued from armed groups, they should not be left alone to survive in circumstances socially and economically devastated by war. Their sustainable rehabilitation will require coordinated efforts and resources from the United Nations system and the rest of the international community.

We must make a better effort to assist those children who have been orphaned, made homeless, handicapped, traumatized, deprived of education or abused in countless other ways by war. It is also important to focus on children in post-conflict reconciliation programmes. There is an urgent need for the international community to support programmes — including advocacy and social services — for the demobilization and community reintegration of child soldiers. Such children should be offered new

experiences that will change their identity from that of soldiers. Education and training remain fundamental to that end; they will not only help children avoid participating in conflicts, but will also build an educated society in post-conflict countries and promote their development.

In conclusion, I wish to express the hope that this debate — and the forthcoming draft resolution initiated by the French delegation — will set out an important agenda and a basis for the future work of the Council and that of other United Nations bodies. They must undertake joint actions not only to curtail the abuse of children, but also to protect those who have yet to face the world from losing their childhood and their dreams before they have the opportunity to truly come to life.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In view of the lateness of the hour, and bearing in mind that there are still a number of speakers invited under rule 37 remaining on my list, I intend, with the concurrence of members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3.15 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.25 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.4898/Corr.1

Security Council

Fifty-ninth year

Provisional

4898th meeting
Tuesday, 20 January 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

Corrigendum

Page 29, second column, first line

For Second Secretary of the State Peace and Development Council *read* Secretary II of the State Peace and Development Council

04-23013 (E)

United Nations S/PV.4898 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Fifty-ninth year

Provisional

4898th meeting

Tuesday, 20 January 2004, 3.15 p.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Alvear Valenzuela/Mr. Muñoz	(Chile)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Benmehidi
	Angola	Mrs. Bento
	Benin	Mr. Zinsou
	Brazil	Mr. Cardoso
	China	Ms. Jiang Ning
	France	Mr. Bertoux
	Germany	Mr. Thuemmel
	Pakistan	Mr. Khalid
	Philippines	Mr. Mercado
	Romania	Mr. Dumitru
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nikiforov
	Spain	Ms. Menéndez
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Lake
	United States of America	Mr. Olson

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2003/1053)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

04-21364 (E)

The meeting resumed at 3.40 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Kenya, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda.

In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

If there is no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the representative of Kenya to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council chamber.

I wish to remind all speakers of what I indicated at the morning session, in other words, that they limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. In addition, I will not be individually inviting speakers to take seats at the table, and inviting them to resume their seats on the side. When a speaker is taking the floor, the conference officer will seat the next speaker on the list at the table. I thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

The next speaker inscribed on my list under rule 37 is the representative of Israel. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Mekel (Israel): Madam President, at the outset, please allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency for the month of January and to express our satisfaction with your efforts in initializing this debate. We would also like to extend our congratulations to your predecessor and to the newly elected members of the Council.

In spite of numerous developments, aptly detailed in the report of the Secretary General (S/2003/1053) on children and armed conflict, the general situation for children remains grave and unacceptable. Placing children on the front lines as active participants in violence, as aggressors or as victims, has dire short-term and long-term consequences for children, for the societies they live in and for the hopes and dreams of a stable peace.

The latest report of the Secretary-General contains shocking information about the abuse and harm to which children continue to be subjected. We cannot allow ourselves to be desensitized to it. Unfortunately, many of the gains described in the report relate to developments on paper rather than in the field. In this regard, the deployment of child protection advisers in peacekeeping missions and the practice of naming parties to armed conflict that are recruiting or using children, if properly implemented, seem to us to be of particular importance because of their potential for bringing about positive change on the ground.

In word and in deed, Israel has supported international initiatives aimed at protecting children from the devastation of armed conflict, including the landmark Convention on the Rights of the Child and its protocols, to which we became a signatory two years ago. Israel's accession to the Convention was followed by our adoption of "Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty", a law that ensures that the rights of the child are guaranteed constitutional protection. The adoption of the Basic Law sparked a flurry of judicial and legislative activity that broadened the commitment of Israeli society to the principles of the Convention.

It goes without saying that the formal practice of forced conscription of children is abhorrent and must be outlawed. But the participation of children in armed conflict is not limited to formal military service. Children have also been recruited for roving militias, armed gangs and terrorist groups. In our region, children have been recruited and exploited by terrorist organizations as human shields, for the placing of explosives, as gunmen and even as suicide bombers. It is regrettable that the Secretary-General's report fails again to make specific mention of this reprehensible tactic in our region. We regret also that the report does not address in more direct terms the plight of Israeli children suffering from a relentless terrorist campaign.

Both Israeli and Palestinian children continue to be the greatest victims of the terrorism that plagues our region. Over the last two years, Palestinian children have been increasingly used as human shields and have been mobilized for terrorist attacks, while the average age of suicide bombers has dropped significantly. For

an ever-increasing number of Israeli children as well, growing up is becoming a painful experience.

Indeed, Israeli children are often the intended and preferred victims of terrorists. Palestinian terrorist groups, such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade have directed many terrorist attacks specifically against children, including attacks on school buses, discotheques, pizza parlours and other locations where large numbers of children are known to gather.

In the conflict that plagues our region, as in any conflict, no one has a monopoly on the status of victim. The suffering of Israeli and Palestinian children must be acknowledged. If we deny the suffering and victimhood of the other side, we undermine the prospects of mutual understanding and tolerance that are the foundations of any lasting peace.

Recently in the General Assembly, unfortunately, there was an attempt to do just that. The General Assembly adopted for the second year in a row a resolution pertaining specifically to the situation facing Palestinian children. While Israel shares this concern for the plight of Palestinian children, we continue to believe that the issue of children should not be politicized and the situation of any group of children should not be singled out in this way, let alone distorted. Once this resolution was adopted and in order to rectify this imbalance, Israel reluctantly introduced a mirror resolution to draw attention to the suffering of Israeli children from terrorism. Unfortunately, a group of delegations, determined not to acknowledge that Israeli children were also victims in this conflict, sought to distort this resolution beyond recognition. As a result, Israel was compelled to withdraw its text. In doing so, we expressed the hope that Member States would see this unfortunate incident as a wakeup call to end the politicization and double standards in United Nations debates on issues of universal concern, such as the plight of children. We continue to hold to that hope today.

In conclusion, Israel welcomes the discussion of specific issues concerning the protection of children in armed conflict and the opportunity to express our firm support for the continuation of the monitoring process to that effect. We yearn for the day when peace is the prevailing global condition and there is no longer any need to deal with the specific impact of armed conflict on children. But, until that day, the international community must continue to act with resolve in extending protection to those who are most vulnerable and confronting with courage the factors that continue to feed this ugly phenomenon.

Madam President, in concurrence with your desire, I have read only a shortened version of our statement, and a full version is being distributed.

The President: I thank the representative of Israel for his statement and for having adhered to the time allotted for statements. I now call on the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Madam President, may I begin by complimenting your skilful stewardship of the Council's deliberations today and Chile's leadership during the current month. We also express our deep appreciation to Mr. Olara Otunnu and Ms. Carol Bellamy for their comprehensive briefings.

During the past decade and a half, the international community has taken some significant measures to alleviate the sad plight of millions of children in armed conflict. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has provided a tool at the national and international levels for the protection and development of children worldwide. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict has strengthened these universal norms. At the special session of the General Assembly in 2002, world leaders reiterated their determination to ensure a world fit for children. The Security Council in its successive resolutions has further consolidated international standards for the protection of children in conflict and post-conflict societies.

These achievements took considerable efforts on the part of all concerned, including the United Nations and its agencies, the Member States, international civil society and parties to conflicts. The dedication of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, in raising awareness of the protection regime deserves special mention. Bangladesh has consistently advocated bringing the Special Representative's Office under the United Nations regular budget.

As we deliberate today, some 300,000 children are still being used as child soldiers around the world. Millions remain physically disabled. Many have been gravely psychologically traumatized. Twenty million

children have been uprooted from their homes due to wars. Entire generations of children are growing up permanently scarred by the brutalities of conflict. The most vulnerable are the girl children. They fall victim to sexual abuse, other violence and the deadly HIV/AIDS. Haunted by horrific memories of atrocities, the children often find little scope for healing as they witness the perpetrators getting away with impunity. The vicious cycle of their sufferings continues into the post-conflict stage as they inexorably descend into poverty, illiteracy, hunger, malnutrition, trafficking or foreign occupation.

Far more, as all will agree, needs to be done urgently to protect every child victim of conflict. The era of application in international child-protection standards must replace the era of rhetoric. The Council must ensure that parties involved in a conflict respect global standards of protection of children in conflict. The specific needs and vulnerability of children, particularly of the girl child, must be integrated into peace processes and post-conflict disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, recovery and reconstruction.

We strongly support the incorporation of child protection advisers and related provisions into the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations. The practice of zero tolerance for violations of codes of conduct by United Nations peacekeepers and associated personnel must continue. Children in post-conflict societies must be ensured access to trauma counselling, education and health services. The illicit flow of small arms into conflict areas must be curbed. The culture of impunity for violators of children must also be brought to an end.

Bangladesh has always kept the question of the protection and development of children high on its national and international agendas. We were among the first countries to have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as its two Optional Protocols. The protection and promotion of children's rights, particularity those of the girl child, and allocations of the highest budgets for their education and health have been the priority policy thrust of our Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. We have adopted a national plan of action for children. The decade 2001 to 2010 is being observed in Bangladesh as the Decade of the Rights of the Child.

Our civil societies and private sectors work shoulder to shoulder with the Government to promote the best interests of children. Our peacekeepers receive special training on child protection as they carry the message of peace to conflict-ridden societies across continents. As Ms. Carol Bellamy stated, a leading Bangladeshi non-governmental organization, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, is contributing significantly to the rehabilitation of child soldiers and girl children through involvement in non-formal education in Afghanistan. Ironically, Bangladesh, a developing nation itself, has done more than its share in spreading stability and values to conflict-ridden parts of the world, including Africa. We believe that societal change must come from within or from positive examples derived from comparable milieus. Efforts to impose alien values will risk evoking the same sentiments as those of the Trojan priest Laocoon, who feared the Greeks even though they came bearing gifts.

We must prevent today's victim from becoming tomorrow's perpetrator by inculcating a culture of peace and non-violence in the mind of every child. Bangladesh calls upon the Council and the United Nations system to lend support for the observance of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World through concrete programmes on peace education and conflict prevention. Robust pursuit of these goals will most certainly alter the future of the child for the better. It will also help usher in a new dawn of hope for humanity.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Bangladesh for the kind words he addressed to the presidency.

I now call on the representative of Ireland.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): The European Union (EU), Madame, warmly welcomes your decision to mark the high importance of today's debate by presiding over our deliberations.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia; the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process; potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia

and Montenegro; and the European Free Trade Association country, Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

I thank you, Madame, for providing us with an opportunity to debate this important issue and I also wish to express my appreciation to Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, for their briefings.

The European Union strongly endorses the continued commitment demonstrated by the Security Council in giving high priority to the protection of children in its regular dialogue on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Regrettably, young boys and girls continue to be pulled into outright combat and exploitation by armed forces and groups. We welcome in particular the adoption of resolution 1460 (2003) on 30 January 2003.

The European Union also wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict of 10 November 2003 and agrees that

> "the annual review and debate by the Security Council on this issue should be mainly devoted to a comprehensive review of the state of compliance on the ground" (*S/2003/1053, para. 83*).

The recommendations contained at the end of the report warrant careful consideration, in particular when it comes to non-compliance. Targeted measures should be taken by the Council where insufficient progress has been made by parties in accordance with resolutions 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003), as proposed in the Secretary-General's report. All relevant parts of the United Nations system must shoulder their respective responsibilities in a coordinated manner, both for systematic monitoring and reporting of violations and compliance, and for preventative and rehabilitating actions for these child victims of armed conflict.

We reiterate again that the recruitment and use of girls and boys in armed conflict is an atrocity that must end, violating as it does international humanitarian law as well as human rights law. The EU strongly urges the States and other parties to armed conflict listed in annexes I and II of the Secretary-General's report to immediately stop the recruitment and/or use of girls and boys in situations of armed conflict. In this context, we urge States to accelerate the process of ratification or accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which includes, as a war crime, conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 or using them to participate actively in hostilities in both international and non-international armed conflicts. As such, we fully subscribe to the views and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report with respect to the role of the International Criminal Court in this arena and endorse the statement that concrete steps should be taken to ensure the early prosecution of persons responsible for war crimes against children.

In the last decade, more than 2 million children have been killed in armed conflict and more than 6 million have suffered physical mutilation. Reliable estimates suggest that some 300,000 child soldiers are currently engaged in war operations. Millions of children have become orphans or have been left homeless as a result of war. The cruel irony that, in armed conflict, it is the innocent who are often the first casualties remains intact.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols set out clear legal standards pertaining to the protection of children. The European Union urges those States that have not yet done so to accede to the Convention as a matter of priority and to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Allow me to reflect briefly on some recent initiatives undertaken within the European Union. First, the General Affairs Council of the European Union approved, on 8 December 2003, the European Union Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. These Guidelines, the culmination of many months of deliberation, were drafted in collaboration with the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and with UNICEF and a group of relevant non-governmental organization experts. The implementation of these Guidelines and their immediate, effective and sustained mainstreaming throughout all relevant European Union policies and actions is a priority of the European Union.

The European Union will address the short-, medium- and long-term impact of armed conflict on children in an effective and comprehensive manner,

making use of the variety of tools at its disposal and building on past and ongoing activities.

These objectives will be pursued through a number of specific initiatives, including, importantly, the monitoring of and reporting on conflict area situations and the continuation and development of technical cooperation programmes for the disarmament, rehabilitation and reinsertion into civilian life of children.

These newly adopted Guidelines were also discussed in Rome on 10 and 11 December 2003 in the presence of governmental and non-governmental organization representatives from 27 European countries on the occasion of the European Union Forum on Human Rights, organized by the Italian Presidency of the European Union and the European Commission. The Forum elaborated a number of proposals aimed at preventing the trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors and their involvement in armed conflict. The European Union has already indicated that it will attach priority to children and armed conflict under the European Union's human rights agenda in the next six months.

Secondly, I would like to mention the European Union Council conclusions on cooperation between the European Union and the United Nations on crisis management, specifically on the protection of civilians in European Union-led crisis management operations, which call for mainstreaming a strong child protection perspective in European Union-led crisis management operations.

The European Union also applauds the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Council to integrate child protection advisers into United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building operations. The European Parliament has also played a prominent role in the protection of children affected by conflict. At its most recent meeting in October 2003, the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group-European Union Joint Parliamentary Assembly adopted a resolution on the rights of children and child soldiers in particular.

The European Union continues actively to support and work closely with the Office of the Special Representative, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other actors, including non-governmental organizations, aimed at relieving, to the greatest extent possible, the suffering of children in situations of armed conflict and ensuring that those responsible for horrific crimes are held accountable. We look forward to receiving and giving due consideration to the Secretary-General's comprehensive assessment of the scope and effectiveness of the United Nations system's response, including recommendations for strengthening, mainstreaming, integrating and sustaining activities in relation to children affected by armed conflict.

Addressing the issue of children victimized in armed conflict must increasingly take place collectively at national, regional and international levels. Momentum generated must not be lost. The Security Council will shortly begin deliberations on a new draft resolution. It is our hope that a new draft resolution — among other things — will result in a continuation of the list of all parties to armed conflict that recruit or use soldiers in violation of international obligations in all situations. Guidance from the Council on how to strengthen further monitoring and evaluation of the situation of children in armed conflict would also be useful. We hope that many of the concerns articulated today will resonate in these ongoing deliberations and will find voice in the draft resolution to follow.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Sierra Leone, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): We are grateful for your decision, Madam, to be present here today to lead our discussion on one of the most pathetic situations in the world today — that of children affected by armed conflict.

I should also like to extend my delegation's sincere appreciation to two leading and dedicated advocates for children in the United Nations family: the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, for their informative and, indeed, instructive, account and picture of the situation of children victims of armed conflict.

This meeting is the logical follow-up to that convened by the Security Council yesterday on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In our statement yesterday, my delegation spoke of the need to acknowledge that the illicit trade in those weapons constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

It is a threat that must been seen in the context of the unnecessary suffering that it has caused and that it continues to inflict on innocent children throughout the world, especially in developing countries such as Sierra Leone.

From what we have experienced in Sierra Leone and other parts of the West African subregion, one has every reason to conclude that the illicit trade in and circulation of small arms and light weapons promotes extreme cruelty against and by children. It helps to create child combatants and child perpetrators of heinous crimes against not only adults, but also children. In short, it creates the condition in which children become the victims and perpetrators of such practices as rape, abduction, amputation, sexual slavery and wanton and indiscriminate killing.

All children, whether or not they are currently affected by armed conflict, will be the principal beneficiaries of measures now under way to prevent, combat and eradicate the scourge of the illicit trade in these weapons — what one could describe as weapons of mass destruction because of the magnitude and devastation they have caused to human life and property. We are by no means exaggerating the linkage between the illicit flow of small arms and the terrible situation in which children find themselves in areas of conflict. This linkage is a reality; it is a challenge which we must all accept.

My delegation welcomes with appreciation the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the protection of children in armed conflict. The list of advances made over the past few years towards the protection of children affected by armed conflict is encouraging. It covers many of the important legal and political measures taken by States and international and regional organizations. The list and the report as a whole also affirm the crucial role that public advocacy, such as that undertaken by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and non-governmental organizations, can continue to play in the complex task of ensuring effective protection of war-affected children.

In this regard, we note some of the measures contained in the report that pertain directly to the situation in Sierra Leone. Reference is made, for example, to the establishment of the National Commission for War-Affected Children, which was initiated Mr. Otunnu, and the organization of the Children's Forum Network. Reference is also made to the "Voice of Children" radio project, which provides a platform for one of the 10 imperatives endorsed in the worldwide "Say Yes for Children" campaign organized by UNICEF about two years ago — namely, "Listen to children".

An important development that is not in the Secretary-General's report, but that my delegation would like to highlight, is the fact that among the crimes alleged in the recent indictments at the Special Court for Sierra Leone is the use of child combatants. The crime of conscripting and enlisting and/or the use of boys and girls to participate in active hostilities is punishable under article 4 (c) of the Statute of the Special Court. This could serve as a deterrent to future attempts to recruit children for combat and for the purpose of perpetrating acts of sheer brutality.

Just over a year ago, a young Sierra Leonean — a former child combatant — appeared before the Council to relate the story of his abduction and participation in what the Special Court for Sierra Leone has characterized as the "criminal enterprise". Articulating his vision of life after a brutal conflict, the young man also brought a message — a signpost, so to speak — which the Security Council should follow in devising ways and means of advancing the promotion and protection of the rights of children, especially those affected by armed conflict. This is a very important development in the area of accountability that should not go unnoticed.

Although the rebel war in Sierra Leone and the recruitment and participation of child combatants is no longer an issue, and although disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes are under way in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, we are seriously concerned about the cross-border movement of armed children and youth in the subregion. These are "the new home-grown mercenaries" who, for one reason or the other, slip through DDR programmes, regroup and create new pockets of armed rebellion aimed at ruthless and protracted destabilization of the subregion. They are also the precursors of urban criminal elements in post-conflict situations.

We note that on the list of recent advances towards the protection of children in armed conflict, the Secretary-General highlights, among other things, the fact that children's issues have been incorporated into peace agreements and peace accords. This is

commendable, since those agreements also include provisions for disarmament and demobilization.

The Sierra Leone delegation endorses the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, especially those relating to concrete measures that the Security Council can take in the context of its responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security. These measures should include, where necessary and appropriate, targeted arms embargoes and travel restrictions. However, effective monitoring mechanisms would have to be put in place.

We wish also to recall Ms. Bellamy's statement this morning that funding should not entirely depend on voluntary contributions. She stated that resources need to be made available for child demobilization as early as possible, well before the DDR process. We attach great importance to this.

In his final recommendation, in paragraph 105, the Secretary-General rightly suggests that greater and more concerted efforts should be deployed to end ongoing conflicts — conflicts that we agree are destroying the lives of millions of children. He adds that efforts should be made to address "the key factors that facilitate the occurrence and recurrence of conflicts".

My delegation interprets this as a call for concerted efforts for the prevention of armed conflict. If indeed we are committed to the promotion and protection of children, particularly those affected by armed conflict, we should also deal with the root causes of armed conflict, especially those that are directly linked to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and in precious natural resources, such as diamonds from Sierra Leone. The prescriptions we are preparing and administering are essential, but they must be accompanied by preventive measures. As the saying goes, prevention is better than cure.

Since the United Nations is now fully aware of the international dimensions of these phenomena, and in view of their implications for international peace and security, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to appeal to the Security Council to assume a more proactive role in the search for concrete and effective solutions, as well as preventive measures, for our children's sake.

Meanwhile, my delegation looks forward to the results of the comprehensive assessment now being undertaken by the Secretary-General of the scope and effectiveness of the response by the United Nations system to the issue of children in armed conflict, with a view to strengthening, mainstreaming, integrating and sustaining these activities.

Mr. Wagaba (Uganda): I would like to thank the Security Council for allowing my delegation to address it on this important issue of children and armed conflict.

My delegation has carefully studied and taken note of the fourth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, contained in document S/2003/1053. The report covers a wide range of conflict situations in which children have faced grave human rights violations, including abduction, forced recruitment into armed groups, rape, maiming and killing. The report also proposes a number of measures aimed at addressing those violations and punishing the perpetrators. The report also contains, in annexes, two lists of alleged violators.

Uganda is a strong supporter of the rights of children. Uganda ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 16 September 1990; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict on 6 June 2002; and acceded to the Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography on 18 January 2002. Uganda therefore applauds all measures meant to ensure the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. In fact, the Government signed, on 4 December 2003, a memorandum of understanding with Save the Children/Denmark's Uganda Country Programme to implement a project on strengthening the capacity of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) in the area of child rights.

My delegation wishes specifically to address paragraph 63 of the report, as well as the list contained in Annex II to the report, in which references are made to the Uganda People's Defence Forces and to Local Defence Units allied to the UPDF. Paragraph 63 reads as follows:

> "The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and its allied Local Defence Units (LDUs) recruit and use children. UPDF has also re-recruited children who have escaped or been

rescued from LRA. In a UNICEF/Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs screening, 120 recruits in the UPDF Lugore military training camp were reported to be children under the age of 18, some of whom had been demobilized."

It is the policy of the Uganda Government not to recruit anyone under the age of 18 into the Uganda armed forces, including the Local Defence Units. This policy is strictly observed by the UPDF, and this fact is well known even to the Uganda Office of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In those few cases in which recruits are discovered to have sneaked in because of lack of proof of age, such as birth certificates, they are always thrown out as soon as they are discovered. That was the case in the incident referred to in the Secretary-General's report, where, at Lugore military training camp in the Gulu district, a screening done in conjunction with UNICEF last August uncovered a number of underage recruits into the LDUs. Those recruits were promptly discharged.

However, it should be noted that, with the high rate of unemployment in the Ugandan countryside, coupled with the low standard of education, many people view military service as the easiest way of getting a job. Therefore, it is common for members of the community to deceive recruiters about their age in order to be enlisted. Additionally, in the face of the constant abductions of children by the so-called Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in that area, many parents feel it is much safer to have them join the local militia or the army rather than the rebels.

The situation in northern Uganda, where the Government has been battling a bandit outfit, the so-called Lord's Resistance Army, for many years, is well-known to the international community. In this regard, my delegation is grateful to the representatives of the United States and of the United Kingdom, who, in their statements this morning, gave graphic and accurate accounts of the atrocities being perpetrated against children in northern Uganda by the LRA.

That organization, which has been placed on the list of terrorist organizations by the United States State Department, has been carrying out, and continues to carry out, horrendous and savage acts of brutality against innocent people in northern Uganda, including women and children. Over the years, tens of thousands of children, boys and girls, have been abducted from their homes or schools and taken into captivity by the LRA. They are forcibly recruited into fighting. Girls are forced to become sex slaves by the rebel leaders. Others have been savagely maimed or brutally murdered. All of those acts are well known and have been documented by UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international agencies and non-governmental organizations active in the region.

In his statement to the Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland had this to say on the situation in northern Uganda:

> "For example, on my recent mission to Uganda, I saw a stark picture of what the absence of humanitarian access means. Outside the main northern and eastern towns, access has been dramatically reduced by the increased activity of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Some 1.3 million people have been displaced by the war. Many of those people are living in 'resettlement camps' in inaccessible areas, with severely limited access to their lands, to their livelihoods, and to humanitarian assistance". *(S/PV.4877, p. 3)*

This is the humanitarian tragedy that has been forced on our people by the inhuman acts of the LRA. The Government of Uganda is dedicated to ending those terrorist acts, and in fact President Museveni has been stationed in northern Uganda for more than one year now to personally oversee the efforts towards ending the reign of terror of the LRA.

It is therefore right and proper that the LRA should appear on the list contained in annex II of the Secretary-General's report. That organization should be condemned by all right-thinking people, and every pressure should be brought to bear on it and its leadership so that it ceases its inhuman actions. Its leaders should be apprehended wherever they are and brought to justice to answer for their crimes against humanity.

However, my Government is outraged that the Secretary-General's report should purport to mention the UPDF in the same breath as the LRA. It is outrageous not only because the allegations against the UPDF are not true and have been repeatedly denied by the Uganda Government but also because the author of the report, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Under-Secretary-General Olara Otunnu, has been

invited on numerous occasions by the Uganda Government to visit Uganda or send a team there to investigate the situation on the ground. On all those occasions, Ambassador Olara Otunnu did not find it fit to go to Uganda or to send a mission there but instead has chosen to rely on hearsay information gathered on visits to neighbouring countries.

The Uganda Government is baffled by this hostile attitude on the part of Ambassador Olara Otunnu. This concern of my Government has been brought to the attention of the Secretary-General by my President, President Museveni, when he met the Secretary-General in May 2002 and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in his letter to the Secretary-General in May 2002. The same concern has been expressed by the former Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations in his letter to the President of the Security Council dated 16 January 2003 (S/2003/124), as well as the current Permanent Representative in his letter to the President of the Security Council dated 4 December 2003 and circulated as Security Council document S/2003/1160. In all those communications, the Uganda Government has reiterated its open invitation to the Special Representative to visit Uganda or to send an investigative mission, but the invitation has been ignored to date.

The Government of Uganda is left with no alternative but to assume that Ambassador Olara Otunnu has an axe to grind with the current Government in Uganda. It must be remembered that Ambassador Otunnu was born in Uganda and is a native of the very area in northern Uganda where the LRA is carrying out those atrocities. Ambassador Otunnu was, as a matter of fact, Foreign Minister in the brutal military regime which was removed in 1986 through popular resistance and replaced by the present Government. Since 1986, Ambassador Otunnu has not stepped inside Uganda for reasons best known to himself. Furthermore, he has ignored the plight of the people of northern Uganda during his tenure as Special Representative.

If the recommendations contained in the report were to be implemented against the Uganda Government, it would certainly weaken the Government's capacity to protect its citizens against the attacks of LRA. It is the sincere hope and expectation of the Uganda Government that the Council will not allow Ambassador Otunnu to use the cover of the authority and office of the Secretary-General to advance his own personal hostile agenda against Uganda. My delegation strongly urges the Security Council to reject the listing of the Uganda People's Defence Forces, as well as the Local Defence Units allied to the UPDF, in annex II to the Secretary-General's report. We further urge the Security Council to demand that the Special Representative send a mission to Uganda to specifically investigate the allegations contained in paragraph 63 of the report before taking action on it.

The President: I call on the representative of India.

Mr. Nambiar (India): Your delegation has been sedulous, Madam President, in pursuing this month an agenda of important though sombre thematic issues for the consideration of the Council. This open meeting of the Council on children and armed conflict deals with one such issue. For those who believe the poet who said that "Heaven lies about us in our infancy", the "shades of the prison-house" that "begin to close upon the growing boy" would appear to have a context not quite apposite to the theme of today's debate. But they most certainly describe the plight of many children in different parts of the world caught up in the vicious grip of conflicts they hardly understand but find themselves hopelessly enmeshed in.

Children have become increasingly involved in conflicts, both as targets of violence and as combatants. During the last few years, more than 500,000 children, recruited in 87 countries, with approximately 300,000 actively participating in combat, have been involved in conflict in some form or another. Aged generally between 15 and 18 and some as young as seven, child soldiers are often in support services. The rise in intra-State conflicts, compounded by conditions such as internal displacement and refugee situations, has caused the phenomenon of the child-soldier. It is often impossible to make a distinction between a forced and a voluntary child soldier. Whereas some children join armed groups for food, survival or to avenge atrocities committed in their communities, others are physically abducted for war by armed groups. Enticed by promises of food, shelter and security and sometimes plied with drugs, child soldiers are at times led to commit atrocities against other armed groups and civilian populations, sometimes even against their own communities.

The use of children in armed conflict has been aggravated by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons worldwide. These weapons are inexpensive, durable, small, lightweight, easy to maintain and small enough for them to handle. Illegal arms trafficking and poor monitoring of the legal trade make it easy for them to gain access to such weapons. It cannot be denied that in many conflict situations, the most vulnerable members of the population, particularly women and children, are targeted with impunity. While no leniency should be shown on crimes perpetrated against innocent children, we need to see in perspective the fact that many children responsible for reprehensible crimes have often been manipulated by unscrupulous adults to take part in armed conflicts.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, deserves our commendation for his statement and comprehensive report (S/2003/1053). We note his recommendations on the road ahead, including the challenge of launching the campaign for an "era of application". The report demonstrates that significant progress has been made in the mandate of incorporating the impact of armed conflict on children in the international peace and security agenda.

Before commenting on the specifics in the report of the Secretary-General, a few general points made in the past by the Indian delegation may need reiteration.

The first relates to salience. How useful is it to have thematic debates in the Security Council on subjects such as the present one? It is true that a large number of children are victims of armed conflicts. But it is also a fact that malaria and AIDS kill more children than conflicts do, but in the Council we do not deal separately with children and malaria or children and AIDS or request reports from the Secretary-General on them. An unconscionable number of children have died as a result of sanctions, but we do not recall the Council holding a debate on the effect of sanctions on children or seeking a report from the Secretary-General on that subject either. A sense of balance and perspective should be retained in order to make sure that too narrow a focus does not blot out the larger picture of what the Secretary-General has designated as the soft challenges to international peace and security.

The second point relates to applicability. There are recommendations relating to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol and to international humanitarian law. No role is envisaged in any of these conventions or other legal instruments for the Security Council in promoting their implementation. While only States are parties to conventions, non-State actors are not bound by them. More important, most armed groups obey no laws, national or international. In some cases of internal conflict, non-State actors or rival political groupings may make offers to adhere to such instruments precisely to gain legitimacy or a political locus standi. Who is to decide whether they are entitled to that or not?

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/1053) refers to the comprehensive body of instruments, norms and commitments that provide a basis for enforcement of the protection and rights of children exposed to armed conflict. While adhering States stand automatically committed and accountable to such norms, the accountability of non-State actors has not been adequately considered or documented. Many of them are infused by religious or political ideology, economic interests or simply outmoded or feudalistic social beliefs and are known for their gross, massive and systematic violations of the rights of children. We would urge the Special Representative to pay greater attention to that aspect, for it, in our view, is the root cause of many of the problems in this area.

Similarly, we would sound a note of caution on the recommendation to establish a dialogue and engage in negotiations with parties to armed conflict, particularly when such parties are non-State actors. Non-State actors are not bound by any legal obligations or commitments, as they have not assumed any such. By initiating a dialogue and engaging in negotiations, we should not encourage a process that would confer on them any legitimacy that they should not have.

The report does catalogue the deployment of child protection advisers in many peacekeeping operations. It is not clear, however, whether any assessment has been made of their work in the area of child protection and the involvement of children in armed conflict. A purposive audit of the efforts undertaken so far in the area is missing in the report. It could have been more useful if the recommendations had built on the lessons learned after providing a critical assessment of the work accomplished in this area. That would have added to the efficacy of the recommended measures.

In the subsection on monitoring and reporting, there is a conclusion that a body of standards constitutes the basis for monitoring. The list consists of a number of instruments that do not command universal acceptance or adherence. How does the Special Representative expect to deal with monitoring the situation of a Member State that is not party to the Optional Protocol, the Statute of the International Criminal Court or ILO Convention 182? The Member State in question — while otherwise committed to the norms and commitments concerning the promotion and protection of the rights of children — would be right in maintaining that it was not bound by any instrument to which it was not a party. The Special Representative must recognize that neither he nor anyone else, for that matter, can seek to impose on Member States the standards derived from these non-universal instruments.

We should like to voice one more concern about the agenda for monitoring and reporting. There is well-established machinery for dealing with alleged violations of human rights by the Government of a State that is party to a specific human rights instrument. The procedures in that respect are well-known and time-honoured. The likely interface between that procedure and the monitoring-reporting mechanism that would come into existence as a result of the Special Representative's recommendations is not at all clear to us. Moreover, the treaty bodies have their own system of dealing with non-compliance by parties with their treaty obligations. There is the ever-present danger of duplication and overlap.

With respect to information gathering and data collection, the report seeks to set much store by information collected from non-governmental organizations. But it is not clear which non-governmental organizations would be depended on, how they would be chosen, how their credentials would be vetted or which type of reliability test would be applied to the information and data provided by the non-governmental organizations.

In the area of monitoring and verification, the report recommends that increasing use be made of the field presence of the United Nations. That raises some pertinent questions. Do the country teams — particularly the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) — have the necessary expertise to perform that function? Would it be within their mandates? Will UNICEF have the necessary expertise at the field level to perform such functions wherever it is called upon to do so?

One final point relates to the attempts to expand on the areas of consideration of the Security Council to include, for example, effective monitoring of "especially egregious violations", as mentioned in paragraph 81 of the report. While one cannot but recognize the motives behind the strenuous efforts to cover the entire gamut of violations that could affect children directly or indirectly, it must be said that there are other United Nations bodies — such as the Commission on Human Rights — that are mandated to undertake such tasks. By taking a continuously expansionist role for itself, the Security Council would not only overlap its functioning with that of other mandated United Nations bodies, but would also be committing its valuable time and resource allocations to functions best handled elsewhere.

These concerns are not raised with a view to belittling the importance of the problem or the urgency of the need to deal with it. Any breakdown of peace and security and the ensuing conflict can be expected to have a tragic impact on children. All Member States have a duty to soften the effects of armed conflicts on children, because they are innocent and vulnerable and should not be made to suffer. However, we feel that we ought to make decisions and act in ways that will lead to effective results. We should also bear in mind the need for obtaining the most efficient and optimal results, as the resources that are dedicated to any of these mandates are finite and inelastic, especially in an era of zero-nominal growth in most United Nations budgets. We should strive for increasing efficiency, cost-effectiveness and impact while dealing with this important question of protecting children from the effects of armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We warmly welcome you, Madam, as you preside over this meeting. Your concern demonstrates the attention that you and your friendly country, Chile, devote to the grave challenges facing future generations and the need to confront them.

We should like to thank Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children

and Armed Conflict, for their briefings this morning. We believe that the contents of those briefings will help us to make progress in confronting the challenge of the plight of children in armed conflicts.

My delegation has carefully read the report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/1053) now before us, and we believe that we should all pay heed to it. We thank the Secretary-General and all those who helped to prepare and enrich the report.

International conventions on the protection and well-being of children, Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the protection of children in armed conflict and the final document of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to children (resolution S-27/2), held in 2002, all strengthen and supplement international norms and should be respected by everyone.

Progress made in the protection of children affected by armed conflict, as described in the Secretary-General's report, is a source of satisfaction, and we welcome it. We have noted a strong will by the parties concerned with this issue to face up to the challenges before them. Nevertheless, and most regrettably, we see no concrete progress in protecting the children affected by the Israeli occupation of Arab land, including the occupied Syrian Golan. The grave situation remains and has indeed deteriorated.

The international community has been unable, to date, to implement international provisions of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, let alone the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions related to the protection of Palestinian children, who, for decades, have been living a miserable life. Let me mention that, while we highly appreciate the reference in the report (S/2003/1053) to the fact that the situation of Palestinian children remains serious and unacceptable, we had hoped that the report would devote some ink to the issues related to the effects of preventing humanitarian assistance from reaching children affected by armed conflicts.

The report of the Secretary-General contains proposals and recommendations that are worthy of study, particularly in light of practices and lessons learned. While we believe that there is a need for a coordinated and systematic mechanism for monitoring and reporting in order to present objective, regular and accurate reports on violations by parties to armed conflicts, we believe that such a question should not be politicized and that selectivity and double standards should be avoided. Furthermore, all possible means for dialogue and negotiation with the parties concerned ought to be used to solve all problems in accordance with agreed norms.

Let me again stress the importance of the role of all United Nations bodies, particularly the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, in confronting the effects of conflicts and wars on children. In addition to the agencies and funds of the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), let me also stress the role of non-governmental organizations, which are fundamental in complementing and promoting international efforts in the appropriate manner and in strengthening our collective efforts to resolve this problem.

Allow me to conclude my statement by stressing that Syria attaches the utmost importance, at all levels, to the issues of children. Syria was one of the first States to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Last year, we ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the second Optional Protocol on sexual abuse of children. These commitments stem from our belief that such international instruments are a fundamental basis for the international community to take action to protect and promote the rights of children for a better future for mankind.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Madam President, I should like, at the outset, to express the appreciation of the Egyptian delegation to you and your friendly country for having convened this important meeting. I should also like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for their efforts and their precious contribution to promoting and protecting the rights of children in armed conflicts. I should also like to pay tribute to Ms. Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for the efforts she continues to make in promoting and protecting the rights of the child. My country is fully committed to supporting all efforts in that regard.

For a number of years now, the Security Council has been paying particular attention to the issue of refugee children, internally displaced children forced to flee their homes and those who have been forcefully recruited or sexually abused, with particular attention to girls, because they are most vulnerable to threats, particularly sexual violence. This is a commendable effort that we support and look forward to continuing. However, I should like to draw the attention of this Council to a category of children who seem to have been forgotten, that is, children under foreign occupation, particularly those children in occupied Palestinian territory who die daily because of continuing violations of their human rights and the brutal use of force. It is sufficient to quickly look at the numbers of child victims of the conflict to see the importance of taking up this issue and shedding light on it. We therefore call on the Security Council to take up the issue of children under foreign occupation. We call on the Council not to politicize the issue and to deal with this category of children with the same attention that it devoted to other groups of children in armed conflicts.

I should like to express my appreciation for the call for the deployment of advisors on child protection and for increasing their role in peacekeeping operations in order to effectively incorporate the rights of children and their protection and welfare in those operations. The experience of advisors in peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Côte d'Ivoire has shown their effectiveness. We hope that this will continue, that more advisors will be deployed to confront the issues of children. Experience shows that they are most effective in awareness-raising regarding children's rights and the need to protect children in peacekeeping operations, as well as in training personnel, both military and civilian, in peacekeeping operations. Their presence has been most effective in giving priority to children's issues through better monitoring and reporting, through the provision of services and by facilitating the flow of information between various elements of peacekeeping operations.

Perhaps one of the most important steps taken by the Security Council since the issuance of the Secretary-General's report last year on the issue of children and armed conflict (S/2002/1299) was the setting up of a list of particular countries and parties that violate the rights of children. This issue requires further study in order to ascertain the way to deal with those parties that violate the rights of children, how to prosecute such parties and how to ensure that such violations do not occur in the future.

We regret the continuing violations of the rights of children in Burundi, in Côte d'Ivoire, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Liberia and in other countries. This proves the importance of further intensifying efforts in the future to eradicate such violations. In this regard, we would stress the importance of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report as well as the measures proposed, including mainstreaming the issues of children in a systematic manner in all peace negotiations and agreements and rendering them essential in all post-conflict programmes. We would also stress the need for a systematic mechanism for monitoring and reporting for the presentation of objective, accurate and regular reports on violations of the rights of children by parties to conflicts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mali.

Mr. Diarra (Mali) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me, Madame, to express my delegation's pleasure at seeing you personally presiding over this meeting. Your presence here — in addition to the fact that your country, Chile, is a member of the Human Security Network, on behalf of which I have the honour to speak — attests to your interest to human rights in general and in the rights of the child, in particular.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Human Security Network, namely Austria, Canada, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Norway, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand and my own country, Mali — which holds the chairmanship of the Network — and South Africa in its capacity of observer on the item under review, entitled "Children and armed conflict".

Allow me to congratulate the Secretary-General of our Organization, as well as his Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, on the high quality of the report published in document S/2003/1053, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1460 (2003). I should also like to thank Ms. Carol Bellamy for her statement.

Resolution 1460 (2003), adopted just under a year ago, noted with alarm the persistence of the phenomenon of children's recruitment and use by parties to armed conflicts. The Security Council invited the Secretary-General to enter into dialogue with those parties with a view to putting an end to such practices. To that end, the parties were to provide information on steps they had taken to halt the recruitment or use of children in armed conflicts. The Council also expressed its intention to consider taking appropriate steps to resolve this issue it if deemed that insufficient progress had been made upon the review of the next Secretary-General's report.

It is evident, however, that, a year since that warning was issued, little has been achieved in the way of results. In fact, the recruitment and use of children have persisted over the course of the period under review. The Secretary-General's report even mentions new parties that have taken up those criminal practices.

Of course, there have been perceptible advances in recent years in terms of the scope of international instruments. I refer, notably, to the nearly universal Convention on the Rights of the Child and to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

The Rome Statute and the International Labour Organization's Convention No. 182 (1999) on the worst forms of child labour also merit mention, as do regional conventions, such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols are a reference point for international humanitarian law on the subject. This legal arsenal is supplemented by the Plan of Action — best known under the name "A World Fit for Children" — adopted in 2002 by the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh special session, as well as by Security Council resolutions, the latest of which is resolution 1460 (2003). The Human Security Network's member countries encourage those States that have not yet done so to ratify the instruments aimed at protecting children exposed to armed conflict.

The development of international standards is not an end in itself. The ultimate objective and major challenge lie in their implementation. To that end, in 2002 the Secretary-General proposed the ushering in of an era of application. The report submitted to the Council highlights some of the concrete measures adopted, such as the inclusion of children's concerns in peace accords; civil society involvement in actions aimed at raising public awareness and advocacy; the adoption of guidelines and plans of action, such as those adopted by the Economic Community of West African States in 2000 and by the European Union in 2003; the establishment of national commissions for the benefit of war-affected children; the adoption of measures aimed at curbing the illicit exploitation of natural and other resources in war zones; the consideration of children's specific needs in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes; and the deployment of child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations.

Those measures, however systematically applied, should not make us lose sight of the particularly egregious violations and abuses committed against children over the past year. I call to mind not only the phenomenon of child soldiers — an occurrence further aggravated by the illicit proliferation of small arms — but also the massacre and mutilation of children, particularly of girls, that have taken place. Armed groups have continued to abduct children, either to forcibly enlist or sexually exploit them, as is often the case for young girls, or to press them into forced labour. Children also fall victim to landmines and unexploded ordnance.

In the face of these overwhelming facts, the Human Security Network has endorsed the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report. Its members are particularly convinced that credible deterrence can be achieved in particular through action by the Security Council, which we invite to take measures targeting parties and their accomplices, including the imposition of travel restrictions on their leaders, their exclusion from any governance structures and amnesty provisions before the International Criminal Court, and a ban on the export or supply of small arms. The recommendations require, finally, addressing the key factors that facilitate the occurrence and recurrence of conflicts — their root causes.

The Human Security Network also urges widening the scope of the list of parties that recruit or use children in armed conflict to cover all situations where these parties exist. Wherever they occur, international crimes committed against children in a situation of war merit the attention and action of the

international community, in particular those of the Security Council.

The Network is committed to pursuing concrete action in order to prevent violations of children's rights where conflict situations emerge, in the course of a conflict or post-conflict, and in terms of assistance to child victims of armed conflicts. This was inspired by the overall goal of bridging the gaps between universal human rights standards and their implementation and between programmatic concepts and systematic response on the ground. With this in view, the Human Security Network has developed a support strategy that identifies a set of operative principles, including enhanced follow-up and training and an alarm function in cases of child rights violations.

The Network has also developed a child rights training curriculum which serves as a comprehensive check list that contains relevant principles, guidelines and references, as well as exemplary training modules, so as to be adaptable to specific situations on the ground and to target groups to be trained. The programme has been made available to the Secretary-General and to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. We express the hope that it will be used effectively in training courses held by all the agencies and programmes of the United Nations and other interested organizations and Governments.

In this regard, in its medium-term work plan for 2003-2005 — adopted in Graz, Austria — the Human Security Network has committed itself to working with United Nations bodies, Governments that share its vision, regional and subregional organizations and civil society towards the implementation of current commitments, which for the most part are integrated into the Secretary-General's report.

Finally, the Human Security Network welcomes the reaffirmation, contained in paragraph 15 of the report under review, of its commitment to children in armed conflicts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Mali for his kind words addressed to the presidency.

The next speaker is the representative of Japan, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Ozawa (Japan): My delegation would like to express its gratitude to you, Madam, and to the Security Council, for having provided us with an opportunity to address the issue of children and armed conflict. This debate comes at an opportune time, as new post-conflict situations are emerging in Africa, and as new actions — in the form of the creation of political missions or peacekeeping operations — may be taken by the Security Council.

Currently, a major newspaper in Japan is running a series of feature articles on the real experiences of child soldiers in Sierra Leone and Liberia, accompanied by photographs showing them carrying Kalashinikov rifles. For many of us living in peace, the concept of child soldiers — 11-year-old girls and 10-year-old boys — is almost surreal, almost incomprehensible. Yet those images are real. We need to help, and we can do so more effectively once the conflicts have ended.

Japan believes that the "Back to School" campaigns run by the United Nations Children's Fund are among the most important ongoing efforts to rebuild societies in post-conflict situations. We are proud to be supporting those programmes in Afghanistan and, now, in Iraq. They help alleviate the trauma of individual children who have endured so much during armed conflict and give hope to their communities for a better future. As a nation promoting the concept of human security, Japan will continue to work together with relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to promote the empowerment of communities, with an emphasis on children and women.

A number of international instruments exist that aim to protect children in armed conflicts: I need hardly mention the historic significance of the comprehensive framework of the Geneva Convention. The international community has striven to improve the level of protection for children in armed conflict. Two Protocols additional to the Geneva Convention — for which we intend to obtain parliamentary approval this year — include specific provisions concerning the protection of children. The basic principle behind such provisions evolved into the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court. The Rome Statute, the establishment of which Japan consistently supported, stipulates that the use of children as soldiers in armed conflict is a war crime. In line with such developments on the legal front concerning the protection of children, Japan signed, in May 2002, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed

conflict, and we intend to obtain parliamentary approval for its ratification this year. We sincerely hope that other nations that have not yet ratified that important instrument will do so soon.

My delegation would like to thank Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for the exemplary work he has done over the past six years in raising the awareness of the international community of the issue of children and armed conflict. Child protection advisers are now appointed to relevant peacekeeping operations, and United Nations agencies are now better prepared to deal with this issue.

At the same time, the issue of children and armed conflict is becoming more and more complex. In order to better tackle those complexities, a more comprehensive approach and better collaboration among United Nations agencies are necessary. In this context, we welcomed the decision of the General Assembly, at its fifty-seventh session, to request the Secretary-General to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the United Nations system response to this issue. That report has yet to be submitted. We hope that it will be issued in the near future and that it will provide us with useful guidance in our discussions on this issue.

We believe that on the issue of children and armed conflict, the time has come for us to move from advocacy to implementation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Costa Rica, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Stagno Ugarte (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like first of all to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you, Madam Minister, presiding over the Security Council's debate on this very important issue. I would also like to express my gratitude for the briefings provided this morning by Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

The protection of children during armed conflict must occupy a priority position on the Security Council's agenda. The world's children are the most vulnerable group in times of war, and they therefore deserve to be the first to be protected. Today, almost 300,000 boys and girls are direct participants in armed conflict, whether as combatants, spies or in another capacity. Millions more are indirect victims of conflict. Thousands of children are killed or wounded as part of the collateral damage of armed encounters. Many suffer from hunger and thirst; thousands more are orphaned or abandoned, or become refugees or internally displaced persons. Hundreds of minors are victims of sexual abuse. Furthermore, the great majority of children caught up in armed conflict lose the chance of an education, and almost all of them are scarred by the psychological trauma of war.

A year ago, when adopting resolution 1460 (2003), the Security Council called upon the entire international community to abide by international standards and principles concerning the protection of children affected by armed conflict. There is no doubt that over the past year there has been some progress. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has been working tirelessly to make the parties to conflict sensitive to the suffering of minors who are combatants and victims of war.

Efforts have been made to include the problems of children in the peace processes in Sri Lanka and the Sudan. Efforts have been made to establish a better dialogue with regional organizations, and national commissions for war-affected children have been set up. The General Assembly has strengthened and secured the budget of the Special Representative's Office.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/1053) also represents an important step forward, as it provides an updated list of groups that recruit children in situations under the Council's purview, as well as a list relating to situations not yet on the Council's agenda.

In some parts of the world, however, the situation of minors worsened considerably over the past year. Several non-governmental organizations have reported massive increases in the kidnapping and forced recruitment of minors in parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Myanmar, by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia and by the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Much work certainly remains to be done.

I should like to point out just some of the measures that the Security Council will have to adopt as a result of this debate in order to protect minors in

armed conflict. First, this body must demand that all the entities on the two lists annexed to the Secretary-General's report refrain from recruiting minors and demobilize those already recruited. The Council must give such entities a deadline for presenting evidence of having taken measures to halt the recruitment of minors, to punish those who continue to recruit them and to demobilize child combatants. If no positive response is received, the Council should impose sanctions, such as embargoes on arms and funds, against entities that continue to use child soldiers. It is crucial, in this context, that the Secretary-General maintain and periodically update the two lists of entities that recruit minors or use child soldiers.

Secondly, it is indispensable that the topic of the protection of minors be systematically incorporated into all the activities of the United Nations. Any resolution adopted by the Security Council must include clear and comprehensive provisions aimed at protecting the safety and the fundamental rights of minors. Plans for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants and peace-building programmes must seek the rehabilitation of minors who are combatants or victims of conflict.

Every peacekeeping operation must include child protection advisers to deal with the problems of children victims of conflict. Before any sanctions regime is adopted, the Security Council should evaluate the possible impact of such sanctions on children. Every sanctions regime must include exceptions aimed at minimizing the detrimental effects it might have on children.

Thirdly, the Council should create permanent institutional machinery that will enable it regularly to monitor in a proactive and comprehensive manner the situation of minors in armed conflict. Such a body should receive periodic reports on violations of the rights of children in situations of armed conflict and must be able to rely on an independent group of experts that can evaluate any information objectively, undertake fact-finding missions to verify allegations, and sound the alarm whenever a situation arises in which the safety of minors is endangered.

Fourthly, the Council must support and lend momentum to the efforts of the Secretary-General and his special representatives to sensitize the parties to conflict to the problems affecting minors.

Finally, as we said last year, it is indispensable for the Secretary-General to refer to the Security Council for its consideration, in keeping with Article 99 of the Charter, any situation of armed conflict in which children under 18 are being recruited or used as combatants.

A year ago, the Security Council committed itself to adopting the necessary to protect minors in armed conflicts. The time has now come to do so, and we must take action.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Costa Rica for the kind words he addressed to the presidency.

Mr. Savua (Fiji): Madam President, my delegation congratulates you and your delegation on your assumption of the presidency and for the consecutive open debates on small arms and light weapons yesterday and on children and armed conflict today.

We would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, for their briefings.

Both issues — small arms and light weapons, and children in armed conflict — complement the broader question of women and peace and security. These concerns are of key importance to this body, reflecting the Council's maturity and wisdom and its desire to "look behind the veil" of international peace and security. This trend is aiding the Council to consolidate its mandate, as stated in the Charter of the United Nations, resolutely partnering in its actions with the General Assembly, with the ultimate goal finally to make a difference in the lives of people.

When the Council's deliberations on these subjects empower vulnerable citizens and give voice to the weak, these outcomes become the measure of its success. The Secretary-General's report on the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict shows a genuine change in attitudes and political commitments as to how children fare in armed conflict. The improved understanding of the political economy of armed conflicts, particularly their impact on children, is also

cause for celebration. We also note that more work remains.

We draw courage from the regional strategy of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. However, my delegation believes that, while Commonwealth efforts will eventually filter down to its constituent subregions, the Pacific Islands Forum region needs to be flagged in the Special Representative's calendar in his agenda for action. This would work well in conjunction with the regional security efforts taking shape within the Biketawa Declaration and also promote the effectiveness of the cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum.

Part of the success of the Organization's mandate on the subject is due to the recognition, in the elaboration of international norms, of the impact of armed conflict on children. We heard directly from children from war-torn regions or from those coming out of prolonged conflicts during the special session of the General Assembly on children. They spoke with a maturity and clarity that are often associated only with adult experiences. No doubt, many more children have been exposed to those kinds of experiences.

"Marie in the Shadow of a Lion" is a remarkable compilation of real testimonies by children who have undergone such experiences. We therefore support the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to use it in a pilot programme and to include it in educational curricula in this future era of application. Existing mechanisms can be reconfigured to support those efforts and obviate the need to reinvent the wheel. As national human rights institutions gain greater knowledge and expertise, they can assist Governments and regional organizations in incorporating the appropriate knowledge into national educational systems and programmes.

This fourth open debate should serve to recall Graça Machel's plea to humankind to respect childhood as inviolate and to consider children as zones of peace. Today, unfortunately, the recruitment of children continues unabated, and the abuse of children occurs with alarming frequency, making it incumbent on the Security Council to show results from — or at least create mechanisms for the realization of — the provisions of its resolutions. The Council needs, for instance, to keep its focus current and dynamic.

Yearly updates of its child soldiers list, such as the ones included in annexes I and II to the Secretary-General's report, represent a practical instrument for monitoring the situation. However, those lists need to reflect feedback from the parties on the list every year. The Council may offer its expertise to those other parties that need help in formulating and implementing action plans. Member States, especially those that are parties to the Optional Protocol, need a facility that will enable them regularly to report on their compliance in a less cumbersome format. Yesterday we all heard calls to end the flow of weapons, a phenomenon that is instrumental in the recruitment and abuse of children.

Smart sanctions or bans of other targeted measures may be invoked by the Council as expressions of its distaste for a phenomenon that, sadly, has characterized our lifetime. We hope that this stage of human civilization will go down in history as one of heightened respect for human dignity, and consciousness of, and sensitivity to, human rights. The scourge of children in armed conflict taints the enlightenment that has been achieved. We have to consolidate our gains and forge ahead, in a holistic manner, in the era of application, with the advocacy, interventions, campaigns and other creative measures which the Secretary-General has devised.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Fiji for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Ecuador, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to ask you, Sir, to convey to the Minister my country's gratitude for her presence in this Chamber, which is clear evidence of the high priority she attaches to this issue, which is of such importance to all of us.

Let me express my country's gratitude to the Secretary-General for his clear and detailed report on children and armed conflict contained in document S/2003/1053, in which he gives us an update of the work done and achievements registered in this area. These achievements are very significant, and have, as the Secretary-General states in his report, been particularly notable since 1998 when the item on children and armed conflict was officially incorporated in the Council's agenda.

As the report notes, without doubt, a broad and solid framework enabling the international community to continue working to protect children affected by armed conflict is provided by the machinery relative to this question in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, International Labour Organization Convention No. 182, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the relevant provisions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and relevant Security Council resolutions.

In order to ensure the necessary protection of children, especially given the persistence of conflicts of all types in various regions of the world, international instruments must be strengthened, their scope must be extended and they must be effectively implemented and complied with.

The right machinery must be established to ensure that those legal instruments are binding not only for Member States of the international community but also for the irregular groups that exploit children by involving them in armed conflicts. The international community must condemn parties to conflicts that violate the legal and moral norms relative to this issue. Ecuador believes that the international community must work with those demonstrating their determination not to involve children and must act against those who defy that resolve of the majority.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for his worthy initiatives, for the commitments achieved in various countries to ensure the welfare and protection of children in conflict and for greatly raising awareness among authorities and the public about the situation of children affected by armed conflict. We also welcome Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, who requested that this issue be included in all resolutions of the Security Council.

One of the saddest and most tragic realities that we have noted in various regions of the world is the profound suffering to which children are exposed as a result of armed conflicts. The report of the Secretary-General takes note of this intolerable reality, including the risks that children face: killings, orphanhood, mutilation, abductions, the denial of education, the lack of health care and grave psychological disorders and trauma. The report also notes the grave situation faced by child refugees and internally displaced children, who are vulnerable to violence, recruitment, sexual exploitation, disease, malnutrition and death.

The report of the Secretary-General underlines the effects on children of the illicit trade in small arms, landmines, munitions and unexploded ordnance and the problems caused by the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts. We believe that allowing children to bear arms and participate in violence, conflict and destruction is inhuman and contrary to the highest values of all societies.

Considerable progress has been achieved in ending the recruitment of child soldiers, as noted in the report. However, much remains to be done, many challenges remain ahead. In these circumstances, the international community must give priority attention to this situation by taking more concrete measures to ensure the most basic rights of children and to mitigate and prevent the grave effects of armed conflicts on children. Ecuador supports the proposal the President made this morning on the specific measures that should be adopted.

The results achieved in protecting the rights of children in armed conflicts are praiseworthy. Nevertheless, we hope that all the necessary efforts and actions will be redoubled to alleviate the consequences of armed conflicts on children the world over.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I will convey your greetings to the Minister, who had to leave momentarily. I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): As stated in the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2003/1053), important advances have been made in the efforts to ensure more effective protection of children exposed to armed conflict in the course of the past few years. Yet, the reality on the ground is that, in many conflict situations worldwide, children continue to be abused on a massive and appalling scale.

Against that backdrop, we welcome the increased attention being paid to children's rights and the situation of children in conflicts. In our view, it is especially important that the challenge of protecting civilians in armed conflict, in particular children, takes its rightful place as an integral part of all relevant

matters dealt with by the Security Council. We welcome the progressive engagement of the Council. The four resolutions devoted to the issue of war-affected children are milestones in our efforts to safeguard children's rights in armed conflict, and we must ensure their effective follow-up and implementation.

We are deeply concerned about the situation in northern Uganda, where children are being abducted and recruited as soldiers in large numbers. Our hope is that a peace agreement between the Sudanese Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement may open a window of opportunity to solve this issue. We commend and support recent initiatives by the Emergency Relief Coordinator to bring the situation in northern Uganda to the attention of the international community.

Many children who have experienced armed conflict have been traumatized emotionally and physically. Not least girls, who are especially vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence. We must therefore take special account of children's needs in peace operations and negotiations. The rehabilitation of war-affected children through trauma counselling, health services and schooling is important in terms of providing a future for those children. In Norway's view, it is therefore important to actively support disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes that address those challenges.

Experience has shown that education, as a fundamental element in children's development, can prevent children from being used for fighting or other military purposes. We are pleased to note that DDR programmes have become an integral part of peacekeeping operations, but we are concerned that the specific needs of child soldiers have not yet been sufficiently addressed within the overall planning and implementation of those programmes. We therefore welcome the suggestion for an assessment of best practices, as referred to in the Secretary-General's report.

We also welcome the inclusion of child protection advisers in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Mission in Angola. It is important that we now assess the working methods and the efforts made by those advisers in order to maximize the effect derived from best practices. Based on that assessment we should consider the inclusion of child protection advisers in all peacekeeping operations.

We welcome as highly appropriate the practice of listing parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict. We call for the list to be updated and circulated regularly. We are also of the opinion that one should consider expanding the list to cover other forms of egregious violations and abuses against children in situations of armed conflict.

The widespread availability of modern lightweight weapons enables children to become efficient soldiers in combat. We must therefore redouble our efforts to establish more efficient mechanisms to reduce easy access to small arms.

Those who are responsible for exploiting children during conflict should not enjoy impunity. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court classifies the enlistment and use of children under age 15 in hostilities, international attacks on hospitals and schools, rape and other grave acts of sexual violence against children as war crimes. We urge those States that have not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute at the earliest possible date.

The best way of protecting children is to prevent armed conflict from breaking out in the first place. That will require fundamental social change in many countries. It will require action against poverty, a breeding ground for human rights violations, that also gives rise to conflicts and child abuse. Conflicts, in turn, reinforce poverty. Therefore, we must intensify our efforts to invest in conflict prevention, humanitarian assistance, peace-building and long-term development cooperation. In short, we must make sure that children in conflict areas have a viable alternative to military life.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Laurin (Canada): Canada welcomes this open debate on children and armed conflict, which comes at a critical juncture for child protection efforts. We congratulate you, Mr. President, on having opened this debate with a short video prepared by War Child Canada. So often visuals are more persuasive than words.

We wish to indicate our appreciation, Mr. President, for the presence of your Foreign Minister during the greater part of the day. That is a clear indication of the importance that Chile attaches to this issue.

The Security Council now has at its disposal a substantial international framework for action. That includes Security Council resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003), as well as complementary resolutions on the protection of civilians, conflict prevention, women and peace and security, and the safety of United Nations and humanitarian personnel. Together with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, those instruments provide us with the tools to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict. Canada encourages those Member States that have not done so to ratify the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. Canada calls to the attention of Member States that the use of child soldiers is classified as a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Unfortunately, egregious violations of the rights of children continue to take place. There is much work that remains to be done. In that regard, we want to thank the Secretary-General for his November report on children and armed conflict (S/2003/1053). The mention of specific conflict situations and the naming of parties using children in conflicts represent important steps in efforts to press parties to conflicts to comply with their international obligations.

We were particularly encouraged to see that the report and its annexes include not only country situations already on the Council's agenda — such as those in Afghanistan and Somalia — but also situations equally deserving of the Council's attention, such as the events taking place in northern Uganda. We must think seriously about how we can further induce those parties to conflict to cease their recruitment and use of children. We must ensure that there are serious consequences for those who refuse to comply.

We recognize, however, that the demobilization of child soldiers is not enough. In his report, the Secretary-General highlights the importance of addressing the specific needs of children in our disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) efforts. Girls continue to be left out of DDR programmes. Greater attention by United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations is needed to ensure that girl and boy combatants — regardless of how they were recruited or used — are demobilized and gain access to country-specific child protection and reintegration programmes. In addition, in order to be deemed successful, the reintegration of children into their families and communities must include effective strategies to prevent their re-recruitment.

We must not forget that the violations of children's rights that occur in situations of armed conflict are not limited to the conscription of boys and girls into fighting forces. In recognition of that, the Human Security Network has made — and will continue to make — a comprehensive approach to children and armed conflict a priority. In that regard, we fully associate ourselves with the statement made today by the representative of Mali, which holds the chairmanship of the Network.

Similarly, discussions of small arms and light weapons must directly address the implications for children of the proliferation of these weapons. Our work at the international and regional levels must not lose sight of the staggering cost of the misuse of these weapons for children and their communities, as was highlighted by Member States at the First United Nations Biennial Meeting of States on small arms.

(*spoke in French*)

We have learned that, for child protection mechanisms to be effective, we need reliable monitoring and credible reporting with well-articulated follow-up for non-compliance with the standards currently in place. We were pleased that the Council's resolutions on Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo contained important references to children, but, on many occasions, the Council continues to ignore child protection in its country-specific deliberations. We realize that the Council must be provided with relevant and timely information on which to base its actions. To that end, Canada reiterates its appeal to the United Nations Secretariat to formulate concrete advice and recommendations to the Council on country-specific situations, to report systematically on child protection and to provide the Council with the information it needs to act.

However, when such information is provided, the Council must shoulder its responsibilities and take action. For peace operations, its action should include clear mandates and the financial and human resources

required for child protection at the country level. In that regard, the deployment of child protection advisers in peace support operations is an important way to systematically monitor and remedy the specific effects of conflict on children. For example, child protection advisers have had a clearly positive impact on the effectiveness of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we believe they can also make a difference in other United Nations missions. We urge the Council to consider the deployment of child protection advisers in the context of upcoming mandates — for example, those for the missions in Sudan and Burundi. The Council must also focus on child protection in the framework of its own missions — particularly by meeting with children themselves — and must be able to follow up swiftly and effectively on reported cases of egregious violations of children's rights.

We eagerly await the outcome of the work of the Office of International Oversight Services assessing the United Nations system's response to children and armed conflict, in conformity with the Secretary-General's United Nations reform efforts. We hope that the assessment will provide important guidance on ways to address child protection in situations of armed conflict in a sustainable and coordinated way.

Canada recognizes the contribution of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The Special Representative is a powerful voice for children victimized by armed conflict. We encourage the Special Representative to interact with special rapporteurs, United Nations actors, civil society and non-governmental organizations, and children and youth in his work.

We also wish to highlight the activities of those who work on the front lines: the representatives of United Nations agencies and of the partner non-governmental organizations who — often at personal risk — strive to meet the needs of children in armed conflicts. Those efforts are essential to combat violations of children's rights and to ensure adherence to relevant international law.

If the Council truly wants to protect children and to suppress egregious violations of children's rights in situations of armed conflict, it must systematically meet its commitments. The era of application proposed by the Secretary-General is well upon us, and we, the international community, are long overdue in translating our commitments to the child protection programme of action and its mechanisms into concrete operations on the ground.

In conclusion, child protection is a shared commitment, and we urge Council members — together with Member States, United Nations agencies and regional and civil society organizations — to make good on our commitment to better protect the rights and well-being of children and to build sustainable peace for all.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Monaco.

Mr. Borghini (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): The principality of Monaco is always very mindful of anything that affects children. We have taken note of the important report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/1053), and we thank him for it. We also thank his Special Representative and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for their briefings this morning and their work.

We noted with satisfaction some progress in the report, particularly in defining norms, drafting reports, establishing aid and monitoring mechanisms, raising awareness among the public and authorities, continuing negotiations and drawing up peace agreements, working to promote child protection and reintegration, and in the development of the situation of some countries — unfortunately rare — all of that often with the valuable participation of non-governmental organizations.

However, as the Council is aware, children continue to be killed, wounded, mutilated, tortured, raped, prostituted, abducted, displaced, terrorized, forcibly recruited, forced to become killers themselves, and so on. As the report stresses, all of this takes place in a general climate of impunity. The two lists that appear in the annexes to the report (S/2003/1053) and that include more than 50 groups and factions or even, it seems, the armed forces of Member States of our Organization, are very disturbing. Of course, we are aware of all the difficulties encountered in trying to put an end to the conflicts that lead to all of these crimes and in trying to put an end the crimes themselves, and we understand that action on these issues needs to be varied, ongoing, persistent and coordinated. To that end, we support, of course, the fundamental principles that should be implemented in the area of the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and

reintegration of children, both boys and girls, whether disabled or not. We likewise support the recommendations for establishing dialogue with the parties to the conflicts and the commitments resulting from this, to the extent possible.

Finally, we support the final recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, in particular, the recommendations dealing with concrete action decided on by the Security Council, with appeals for compliance with norms, with condemnation of violations committed and implementation of targeted measures, and with the role of the International Criminal Court in pursuing the perpetrators.

Before I conclude, I wish to reiterate the thanks already addressed this morning to the French delegation for its active role on this issue. And, truly concluding at this point, Mr. President, I would like to congratulate Chile on the way you have organized and facilitated this meeting of the Council. Since this is the first time that I address the Council, I would like to greet all members, whether permanent or non-permanent, former or new, and I wish them courage, determination and success in discharging their responsibilities.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Monaco for his kind words and I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Berruga (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to publicly pay tribute to the initiative taken by Chile in organizing this open debate on a topic as sensitive and important as this — children and armed conflict. I would also like to thank, on behalf of my country, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Otunnu, for his report on children and armed conflict, prepared in compliance with Council resolution 1460 (2003), in the negotiations for which my delegation actively participated.

At the time, Mexico insisted on the importance of taking advantage of the experience acquired during peace negotiations and on the inclusion of child protection advisors in peacekeeping operations and in the programmes being implemented on demobilization, disarmament, reintegration and rehabilitation. That is why we take note, with particular interest, of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (S/2003/1053). For my country, the protection and rehabilitation of children must be part of all peace negotiations and of the ensuing agreements. The demobilization of child soldiers should also be sought at every point during the conflict, as well as the adoption of special measures to prevent the resurgence of recruitment and any possible reprisals.

Attention must also be focused on special needs, such as the concrete and specific needs of girls, in particular young fighters, as well as of disabled children. The support and commitment of the international community, in particular of donor countries, is indispensable in this regard for the success of our efforts for reintegration.

The complexity of the issue of children and armed conflicts is a challenge for the United Nations. It calls for a coordinated and effective response from several organs and entities in the system, bearing in mind their respective areas of competence. We must also create mechanisms for receiving contributions from civil society, which in many cases is a source of privileged and direct information on the situation of children in armed conflicts.

My delegation is prepared to actively participate in the analysis of the evaluation prepared by the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the effectiveness of the United Nations system's response to the problem of children and armed conflict.

There has undoubtedly been progress in the attention given by the Security Council to the question of children in armed conflict. There are, however, conflicts under consideration by the Council in which the necessary attention to this issue has been lacking. In compliance with resolution 1460 (2003), the Secretary-General could include, in his reports to the Council on conflict situations, a separate section on the use of minors, which might perhaps point to those responsible. Such an analysis should include the repercussions of the illicit exploitation of natural resources, trafficking in small arms and light weapons and the use of anti-personnel landmines.

In Mexico's opinion, the Council has an important part to play. As determined by resolution 1460 (2003), it can contact the parties to the conflict when missions are being carried out in the field and can support the Secretary-General in the dialogues he may undertake. It can also adopt measures to promote compliance with international law and international humanitarian law, in particular relating to children in armed conflicts, and put an end to impunity for those who continue to recruit children in violation of these

provisions. At the same time, we must recognize the progress achieved by parties that have committed to put an end to the recruitment and the use of children in conflicts and to take all required measures to alleviate the suffering of children.

Without a doubt, under the leadership of the Chilean delegation, we are sure these types of issues will be undertaken.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): Let me begin by informing the Council that Azerbaijan commemorates today the anniversary of the so-called "Black January" tragedy that took place exactly 14 years ago in my country. We are paying tribute to the innocent victims of the Soviet invasion. On 20 January 1990, Soviet troops, 35,000 strong, stormed the capital of Azerbaijan, the city of Baku, in a desperate, extremely brutal and yet futile attempt to strangle the ever-growing independence movement and to stop the demise of the Communist regime in Azerbaijan.

One hundred and thirty-three persons were killed, 744 wounded: these are the tragic and telling figures of the massacre committed by the brutal and totalitarian Soviet regime. What is of special relevance to today's meeting is that a large number of those killed and wounded that night were children. This scar is still fresh in our memory and we mourn today, with millions of Azerbaijanis around the world, those who sacrificed their lives for the freedom and independence of Azerbaijan.

Regarding the topic of today's discussion, allow me to join previous speakers in expressing our gratitude to the Chilean presidency of the Security Council for convening this debate on this agenda item, which is of particular interest to the broader membership. I would also like to thank Mr. Olaru Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for the outstanding commitment and admirable professionalism with which they have been discharging their difficult but very important duties, and I thank them for their very informative and interesting briefings.

We also commend the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (S/2003/1053), which we view as a considerable improvement over last year's report and which contains a series of concrete, clear-cut and action-oriented recommendations.

Azerbaijan shares the view that the comprehensive frameworks established for addressing this issue in the United Nations need to be regularly reviewed and updated. Overall, over the course of the past few years, significant progress on this path has been achieved, and we welcome the important advances presented in the report.

But there should be no room for complacency. We have to admit that consistent application of this wide-ranging set of tools and standards on the ground remains the ultimate challenge for the international community, and in particular for the Security Council as the organ bearing primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is clear to all that the gap between theory and practice must be dealt with first.

Indeed, children continue to be the main victims of conflicts and their suffering takes many forms, including murder, imprisonment, recruitment as soldiers and hostage-taking. Deep emotional scars and traumas inflicted on children as a result of hostilities are no less painful, especially among children who have been forced into being refugees and internally displaced children, whose number in Azerbaijan is in the thousands. The consideration of situations of armed conflict and their consequences for children is of acute relevance and primary concern to Azerbaijan, due to the realities of the ongoing conflict in which we are involved with neighbouring Armenia.

In this regard, we fully support the proposals contained in section III D of the report on systematic monitoring, reporting and action, especially the recommendation that the Security Council "should encompass all situations of conflict" (*S/2003/1053, para. 83*). In that regard, we appeal to the Council and to the Secretary-General to take due note of the continued grave situation of the conflict-affected children of Azerbaijan. In this context, the Secretary-General's report to the Council should serve as an important channel for conveying information gathered through the monitoring framework. Such information should serve as a trigger for action, which might range from calls for compliance to condemnation of

violations and the application of targeted measures. In order to put an end to the ever-growing culture of impunity, it is critical that violations lead to concrete measures being taken by the Council.

Although no active combat action is taking place on the ground for the time being, one of the many consequences of the aggression of Armenia against my country is the fact that more than 50 Azerbaijani children are still being held in Armenian captivity and that many others have died after being subjected to ill-treatment. These are figures of the International Committee of the Red Cross, whose representatives have been denied access to all the places where Azerbaijani children are imprisoned. According to our information, their number exceeds 100. Some of those imprisoned Azerbaijani children have been forcefully recruited by the Armenian side into the Armenian army for participation in military activities against Azerbaijan, which is not only inhuman, but also in gross violation of many international instruments, in particular the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, to which Armenia is a signatory.

This horrible fact was made known in the press document issued on 15 January 2004 — a couple of days ago — by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which last Thursday reviewed the second periodic report of Armenia. The Minister of Social Security of Armenia, admitting this fact in response to a question, noted that

> "there might have been cases where children below the age of 18 were called up before 1994 when the conflict with Azerbaijan was sparked over the Nagorno-Karabagh issue".

While we expect the official records of that meeting of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to be made public, this fact deserves proper assessment not only by the Committee, but also by the Security Council and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Having said that, I would appreciate it if the future reports of the Secretary-General on the matter would reflect the situation of Azerbaijani children who have suffered as a result of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In conclusion, I would support the words of Mr. Olara Otunnu, who earlier today said that only the end of conflict is a sure way to start alleviating the suffering of children in armed conflict. I could not agree more with that statement and we again turn to the Security Council, which 10 years ago adopted four resolutions on the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with an appeal to make every effort to ensure their implementation, which will open the way to a resolution of that frozen conflict and immediately disentangle many other knots, including that related to the situation of children in armed conflict. Let me repeat again here the concept that the notion of forgotten conflicts is an insult to those who are exposed to international neglect.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): I should like to begin by extending the appreciation of my delegation to you, Sir, for convening this meeting today on the agenda item before us, which reflects the renewed determination of the Council to protect children from the ravages of armed conflicts. My delegation also commends the Secretary-General for his timely report, which details the advances made towards the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

My delegation has noted with deep concern the current deplorable situation of children in armed conflict. According to statistics provided by the United Nations Children's Fund, approximately 20 million children have been forced to flee their homes because of conflict and human rights violations and more than 2 million have died as a direct result of armed conflict over the last decade. At least 6 million children have become permanently disabled or seriously injured and more than 1 million have been orphaned or separated from their families.

The rights of children in armed conflicts should be acknowledged and respected. We believe that those rights should be made an explicit priority and firmly entrenched in peacemaking, peace-building and conflict resolution processes, as well as in demobilization and reintegration plans. In view of that, we value the integration of child protection into the mandates and reports of peacekeeping missions and the training of personnel, as well as the appointment of child protection advisers in United Nations peacekeeping missions.

My delegation is concerned about the continuing use and recruitment of children as child soldiers.

Statistics indicate that, currently, about 300,000 child soldiers, including boys and girls under the age of 18, are involved in more than 30 conflicts worldwide. Once children are carrying guns and involved in armed hostilities, their prospects for enjoying life with the rights set out in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child will be severely undermined.

Indonesia continues to support concerted international efforts to alleviate the sufferings of children dragged into conflicts. Indonesia is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which upholds the political, socio-economic and civil rights of children and strongly supports the Optional Protocol, which strengthens that Convention by calling for a minimum age of 18 for participation in hostilities.

We also pay particular attention to the importance of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes in addressing the issue of child soldiers, especially in the post-conflict period. The overarching considerations concerning the future DDR for children proposed by the Secretary-General could become a good basis for further reflection on the issue.

My delegation deplores the incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse of women and children, especially girls, in humanitarian crises and conflict situations. In this regard, we emphasize the importance of special protection for children at refugee camps and the observance of the Secretary-General's bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and those to improve greater awareness of personnel's responsibilities as United Nations peacekeepers, especially in the protection of vulnerable populations.

Armed conflicts have generally been kept alive by a continuous supply of weapons. Children become victims and victimizers when they are involved in armed conflict. Statistics show that between 8,000 and 10,000 children are killed or maimed by landmines every year. It is very pertinent in that regard that we strengthen our commitment to address the impact that landmines, unexploded ordnance and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons have on children.

Complex emergencies have an impact on adults and children that affects them in various ways. Such situations create additional burdens for children when they are displaced from their homes and communities and become separated from their families. Humanitarian assistance — including family reintegration programmes — is important if we are to address such situations.

In sum, the future of humanity depends on children. The use of children in armed conflict casts a dark shadow over their future, for children who are exposed to violence often carry fears and hatred in their hearts and minds that have profound and long-term effects. Hence, much needs to be done to alleviate their suffering and to ensure that, through adequate support programmes, they can take their rightful place in their societies. We are duty bound to extend our cooperation to the Secretary-General in his efforts to address the issue of children affected by armed conflict.

I would be remiss in my duty if I concluded my statement without commending the role played by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, who has made significant contributions to uplift the lives of less fortunate children — for many of whom life will now be worth living — as well as the role of the United Nations Children's Fund in addressing the issue. As far as fulfilling the mandate of the Special Representative is concerned, my delegation stresses the importance of close consultation and cooperation between the special adviser and Member States.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): We appreciate this opportunity to contribute in the review of the implementation of resolution 1460 (2003), as well as the Council's earlier resolutions, 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001). These texts, indeed, provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the protection of children affected by armed conflict, as was stated in resolution 1460 (2003) — a framework that must be rendered meaningful by means of periodic review and follow-up. The Council debates of past years have been instrumental in creating norms and standards for the protection of children affected by armed conflict. Similarly, new review processes such as this debate should focus on moving forward with the implementation of these norms and standards — the one area where we clearly continue to fall short of the goals that we have set ourselves.

Despite positive developments, the Secretary-General states in paragraph 49 of his report, "all parties mentioned in my previous report continued to recruit or use children" during the period under review and, in

paragraph 22, that, indeed, "the general situation for children remains grave".

The Council supported the Secretary-General's call for an era of application in its most recent resolution on the subject, resolution 1460 (2003). A series of concrete steps should now be taken so that we can effectively enter this era. A first step would seem to be to send the clear message that impunity for those involved in child-related war crimes and abuse has to come to an end. States are responsible for holding accountable the perpetrators of violations of the rights of children as contained, inter alia, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto, as well as the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols.

A number of violations, including the conscription and enlistment of children under the age of 15, have been classified as war crimes by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). If — and only if — States fail to prosecute crimes such as the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence against children, the abduction of children and the denial of humanitarian access to them, everything necessary must be done to make sure that persons responsible for such crimes will be brought before the ICC, in accordance with the principle of complementarity.

We thus fully subscribe to the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report concerning the need for proactive advocacy and public information on the role of the ICC.

As in other areas, application and implementation prove to be an almost intractable challenge which requires the sustained resolve and involvement of the relevant players within the United Nations system. Children affected by armed conflict deserve and require such sustained resolve and involvement. As has become clear both from the report and the debate so far, effective monitoring and, where necessary, follow-up action, will be crucial to advance the era of application. Clear and improved coordination among the players in New York and in the field will be necessary if an effective system of monitoring and reporting is to be established. Given its primary role in the area of international peace and security, a special responsibility falls on the Security Council for setting such up an effective system of monitoring and follow-up action. There must be institutional clarity. That means that there must be no doubt who does what and who is responsible for coordination.

The Council needs to address the issue of children affected by armed conflict more comprehensively in its daily work, in particular through situation-specific resolutions. In the period covered by the present report, of a total of 54 country-specific resolutions, only nine resolutions, covering five conflict areas, dealt with children and armed conflict. Both the Council and the Secretary-General — whose reports form the basis of action by the Council — could ensure full coverage of the issue by, for instance, designating focal points in charge of the issue.

At the same time, of course, monitoring must not be limited to country situations on the agenda of the Council, but, rather, must apply to children worldwide. We believe that the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict can play a continued central advocacy role in this respect. I would like at this juncture to thank the Special Representative for all the work he has done again over the past year.

The monitoring of compliance with Council resolutions and the application of the relevant standards can be effective only if it is supplemented by specific measures in cases where non-compliance persists. Again, the Council has an obvious central role to play in this respect, and we welcome the recommendations made by the Secretary-General regarding targeted measures against those responsible for recruiting children or other crimes against children.

The existing legal framework for the protection of children affected by armed conflict has rightly been praised. But we must now recognize that all norms and standards are only as good and useful as their application. In our view, the current report clearly reveals that implementation has been insufficient and that much needs to be done in order to reach the level that, in theory, we should already have attained.

Establishing clear structures within the United Nations system is a first step and a prerequisite for such progress, and we hope that the still-outstanding assessment of the system-wide response to the challenges in the area of children and armed conflict will lead to clarity on the role of United Nations players.

Given that significant advances in practice are urgently needed, we very much hope that the Council will adopt a strong and clear resolution that can form the basis for the effective improvement of the situation of children affected by armed conflict worldwide — one that, in particular, enables the United Nations system to take effective action in this respect.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): Let me first join previous speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for organizing and presiding over this open debate. We also express appreciation for the presence earlier today of the Foreign Minister of Chile.

The plight of children affected by armed conflict merits the utmost attention on the part of the international community, and their protection must be the primary responsibility of all of us.

The delegation of Armenia takes note of some positive trends in the field of the protection of children in armed conflict in recent years. As outlined in the Secretary-General's report, the issue has gained significant public and political recognition. A set of legal instruments has been adopted, providing a comprehensive framework for addressing the issue. We welcome the recent entry into force of two major instruments: the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. I would like to inform the Council that Armenia is a signatory to both instruments and that their ratification is under way.

It is unfortunate that, despite the legal safeguards in place, horrendous violations of children's rights, such as child soldiering and the killing, maiming and rape of children, still continue in many parts of the world. Obviously, it would have been naïve to expect that problems of such gravity could have been resolved by the mere provision of the relevant legal norms. My delegation therefore fully supports the Secretary-General's call for "an era of application" of the internationally agreed norms and standards for the protection of children in armed conflict.

We believe that, since it is the primary responsibility of Governments to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict and to alleviate their suffering, States' reporting mechanisms to relevant treaty bodies and to the Committee on the Rights of the Child must be strengthened in order to ensure that the necessary focus is maintained on the issue of children affected by armed conflict.

Special measures must also be elaborated and implemented by the international community, and by the Council in particular, in order to ensure compliance by non-State actors. In this regard, systematic monitoring and reporting with respect to the situation in the field take on particular importance. We view the integration of child- protection mandates and the deployment of special advisers in peacekeeping missions as a positive step forward. However, the issue of impunity remains critical, and decisive action is needed in order to put an end to the vicious crimes that are being perpetrated against children.

The issue of refugee children and their rehabilitation and reintegration into society are other important aspects of the problem. Related issues range from demobilization to the provision of humanitarian assistance and the ensuring of children's physical and psychological recovery. We believe also that the needs of girls must be given special consideration in the overall policy of addressing the problems of children affected by armed conflict.

As a country hosting about 65,000 refugee children from Azerbaijan, the Government of Armenia deems these issues of particular concern. Despite the current socio-economic difficulties facing the country, the post-conflict rehabilitation of children, particularly with respect to health care and education, are the focus of the Government's attention. The situation of these children is also reflected in Armenia's second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which was considered by the Committee on 15 January last.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again express my Government's appreciation to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and to donor countries for their assistance and support with respect to child-related issues.

The protection of children affected by armed conflict is a complex issue which requires a comprehensive approach. Armenia therefore believes that concerted action is necessary at the national, regional and international levels. We believe also that our efforts should complement each other, with all stakeholders utilizing the comparative advantages of their respective mandates and experience. The Government of Armenia is committed to doing its

utmost and constructively to contribute to global efforts to promote this noble cause.

Finally, having followed the discussions, which evolved in a very constructive manner — something that is particularly gratifying given the participation of countries that are not often in agreement with each other — I cannot but express my regret at the continued repetition by the delegation of Azerbaijan of its unchanged rhetoric.

The reference to the so-called military aggression of Armenia is totally misleading. The resulting situation is the forced reaction of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan's decision to use military force to suppress the legitimate, just and peaceful quest of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to exercise the right to self-determination, which is guaranteed by international law and the United Nations Charter.

The references to the four Security Council resolutions on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are a clear attempt on the part of Azerbaijan to read those resolutions and apply them selectively in a partial and self-serving manner. Indeed, Azerbaijan itself is in violation of those resolutions, which urge the parties concerned to pursue negotiations within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk group, as well as through direct contacts between them.

Azerbaijan's refusal to engage in direct negotiations with the elected representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh is one of the main impediments to the resolution of the conflict. Meanwhile, what Azeri representatives continue to fail to acknowledge is that Armenia has done exactly what the relevant Security Council resolutions have called on it to do — to use its good offices with the leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh to help find a peaceful solution of the conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Armenia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Kenya, to whom I give the floor.

Ms. Bahemuka (Kenya): On behalf of my delegation, Sir, I would like to express our gratitude to you for having found the time to preside over this very important meeting. As we gather here today for the annual debate on children and armed conflict, we need to reflect seriously on the direction we should take in the quest to protect our children — innocent victims of the wars that continue to ravage the world.

My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for having established the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, in order to address critical issues pertaining to children affected by armed conflict.

We commend the good work which has been carried out over the years by the Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and his Office. We also thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, for UNICEF's continued efforts to address the plight of children around the world.

We welcome the advances that have been made since 1998, when this issue was formally taken up by the Security Council. We are happy to note from the Secretary-General's report that children's issues have been incorporated into a number of peace accords. We welcome also the efforts and progress made so far by the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in creating awareness of the plight of children in armed conflict.

We note with gratitude the role played by regional and subregional organizations and a number of civil society initiatives on this issue, and we call upon those organizations that have not yet done so to consider mainstreaming the protection of war-affected children into their policies.

As we address this issue, which is very dear to us, we should not lose sight of the continuing violations of children's rights. Despite the existence of a strong and comprehensive body of legal standards which are aimed at the protection of children generally, and more specifically at children in armed conflict, Kenya regrets that many parties to conflicts continue to ignore these standards, often with impunity. This calls for a strengthened and enhanced international enforcement regime.

We recognize that much more needs to be done to improve the situation of war-affected children. At a glance, a number of the ongoing armed conflicts around the world show a very disturbing picture of the suffering of the children who are caught up in those conflicts. The image of those suffering children strengthens Kenya's resolve to save them.

My Government therefore supports the measures proposed by the Secretary-General to alleviate the suffering of war-affected children. We recognize that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes are key to the resolution of this issue. We also support the deployment of child-protection advisers in peacekeeping missions and the training of peacekeeping personnel in child protection and child rights.

We especially wish to thank UNICEF, other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations such as Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, which has taken a lead role in negotiating with parties to conflicts to ensure the protection of children.

Kenya continues to play an important role as mediator in regional conflicts, especially in East Africa and the Horn of Africa region. Many children affected by those conflicts are indeed suffering. In that regard, I wish to urge the incorporation of children's concerns in national and regional peace initiatives, agreements and efforts. As a regular troop-contributing country, Kenya supports pre-deployment training initiatives for peacekeepers in regional and United Nations peace operations.

My delegation is of the view that strengthening subregional initiatives to end practices which are harmful to children — including the illicit exploitation of natural resources, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, cross-border recruitment and the use of children in armed conflict — should be of paramount importance to all concerned.

In view of the urgent need to strengthen child protection measures in situations of armed conflict, Kenya welcomes the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report, and we hope that they will provide a useful basis for the way forward. We therefore look forward to working closely with the Security Council as it seeks to endorse the proposals for the establishment and implementation of an effective monitoring and reporting system, as contained in the fourth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

Considering the alarming reports of grave violations against the well-being of children and in view of the fact that more children suffer from the denial of humanitarian access, Kenya hopes that the Council will support the proposal to expand the list of violations under consideration beyond child-soldiering to provide a more comprehensive assessment of the situation of children affected by armed conflict.

We will continue to support every effort by the Security Council and the United Nations to put an end to the climate of impunity in which crimes are committed against children in the context of armed conflict. In that regard, all parties responsible for crimes against children should be brought to justice.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have now come to the end of the list of speakers. I give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, to respond to the observations and comments made by delegations.

Mr. Otunnu: I have listened very attentively to all the comments, critiques and suggestions. We shall follow up on all these in the coming months, and we shall stay in touch with both the Council and delegations that are not on the Council.

Let me very briefly touch on a couple of things. First, as the Council begins to discuss a resolution on this issue, our clear preference and hope is that this would be the occasion for the Council to act, and to act in terms of the targeted measures that are outlined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2003/1053) — targeted measures which would attach to the leadership of fighting entities and measures which would attach to organizations involved in fighting.

If it should prove impossible on this occasion for the Council to act, then it would be exceedingly important that a clear signal go forth from the Council that this is not a pro forma postponement but that it is part of very graduated measures the Council proposes to take.

In that context, I think it would be very important that the Council ask parties to conflicts to prepare in collaboration with United Nations country teams — the United Nations country presence on the ground — specific action plans indicating how and within what time frame they propose to end the recruitment and use of children as child soldiers, to give a time frame that would suggest a sense of urgency on this issue and to come back to the Council within a reasonable period of time with updated information. Otherwise, I fear that the credibility of this agenda — the credibility of our collective efforts to protect war-affected children — as

well as the credibility of the Council, might suffer as a consequence.

My second point concerns my satisfaction in hearing so many delegations underscore the fact that there are other grave violations of the rights of children beyond child-soldiering; that all these child victims of armed conflict deserve the attention, support and protection of the Council; and that in any monitoring exercise we should keep most of these grave violations in view in terms of action and compliance. I express great satisfaction in hearing that.

The third point I would like to make concerns monitoring and reporting. Again, I take note of the fact that there is unanimous support for establishing a monitoring and reporting system. The Secretary-General's report outlines most of the elements: the instruments and standards, what kinds of violations might be monitored and what actors within the United Nations system might participate in such a monitoring exercise — and there are other actors outside: non-governmental and regional organizations. What we now require is to deepen and intensify consultations, discussions, about how the contributions of these various stakeholders — the gathering and flow of information, the added value of various contributions — how all these elements can be coordinated, integrated and become an effective system.

Fourthly, it is crucial that the Council should underscore the important role of the United Nations presence on the ground in relation to monitoring and reporting and the era of application. United Nations peace missions, as well as United Nations country teams and, of course, the non-governmental organizations — we rely on them to gather information on the basis of which we then compile reports to the Council for action.

And in that connection, I would like to say that beyond the Security Council, there are other centres of action — the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the International Criminal Court, the Commission on Human Rights. They, too, should become engaged in the campaign for the era of application within their own areas of competence.

I should just like to refer briefly to two comments by two delegations. First, I should like to thank very much the delegation of India for a very systematic, carefully constructed and serious critique of this agenda and the response of the United Nations system to the use of children in armed conflict. I may not agree with all the views expressed, but I appreciate the seriousness with which that critique has been put forward. This is not the moment to engage in dialogue, but I promise, following this, to engage in bilateral dialogue with the delegation to discuss some of those issues.

The second delegation that I would like to refer to by name is the delegation of Uganda. I listened with much interest and with deep sadness to the polemic by the representative of Uganda, directed at a particular individual. I know the Council has enough wars on its hands, so I want to assure members that I am not to embark on a response to that statement. I think the last thing the Council wants is to add another civil war, between the Ugandan delegation and Olara Otunnu, to its list of conflicts to handle. I do not believe it appropriate to do that here. Rather, I invite the delegation of Uganda to join all of us — rather than fighting each other — in ensuring that we can salvage the children of northern Uganda, who are condemned to abominable conditions of human rights abuses and neglect.

With regard to the lists, I should like to say that one can question what kinds of lists we might have, but I think it is very difficult to question the criteria, the vetting system and the method we use in producing the lists. The Office of the Special Representative, in fact, has no presence on the ground, so we rely entirely on United Nations agencies on the ground and non-governmental organizations to provide us with information, on the basis of which we then convene a group here in New York, which has within it all United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, to vet in the most thorough way possible all the information in order to agree on a list to submit it to the Secretary-General, who in turn submits to the Security Council. And that is the same criterion we use for all situations. So I just wanted to clarify that; I do not want to embark on a response to the polemic.

Finally, I should like very much to thank you, Mr. President, and the Foreign Minister for taking the time to be with us personally today to underscore the importance that she and Chile attach to this issue. I also thank the delegation of France, which has taken the leadership in the past several years in shaping and guiding this issue within the Security Council. We

appreciate that leadership enormously. Again, I thank the Council warmly.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Otunno for his comments. He may rest assured that we shall take very much into account his observations concerning the Security Council's role on this important subject.

I now give the floor, under rule 39, to Mr. Daniel Toole, Director of the Division of Emergency Programmes of the United Nations Children's Fund, to respond to comments made.

Mr. Toole: On behalf of Ms. Carol Bellamy, let me join others in thanking you, Mr. President, your Foreign Minister and your delegation for the expert way in which you have handled these deliberations. In addition, I thank the delegation of France for its preparation of the draft resolution.

We welcome today's action-oriented discussion and support very warmly the era of application about which members have spoken. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General said, he is the person here; we are the people on the ground. As Ms. Bellamy noted in her briefing, we are on the ground before, during and after conflicts, and it is partly our job to make sure that some of the comments and observations that have been made today are followed up on the ground.

We were very pleased by the strong support for a strengthened system of monitoring and reporting, as requested even this morning in Ms. Bellamy's briefing. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) currently documents and reports on the situation of women and children in all countries where we work, so to add the issue of children and armed conflict has been a major priority for us for the past 10 years We appreciate the interest of the Security Council in this area, and we shall continue to do more in that regard. Together with our partners, we shall develop monitoring mechanisms at the country and field levels, and we are also examining effective structures in order to feed into appropriate forums such as the Security Council, but also regional forums in which members take part elsewhere.

I would also underline — as did the Special Representative of the Secretary-General — that it is important to note the various kinds of monitoring and reporting that take place. Our aim is to feed into existing human rights and other mechanisms to ensure that children's rights and particular information on those rights are reflected. That is the mandate of UNICEF, and that is what we shall continue to do.

UNICEF is also very pleased to hear of the strong support for child protection advisers. We strongly support their work in the four peacekeeping missions where they are deployed. They serve an important function in relation to, first, capacity-building within the missions themselves, and secondly, monitoring reporting within the mandates of peacekeeping missions. In addition, they allow the situation of children to be addressed within the complete peacekeeping operation itself and report back to Council meetings. As Ms. Bellamy mentioned, we would support deploying child protection advisers in all peacekeeping missions.

Moreover, we were very pleased with the strong support for efforts to support disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). We are encouraged by the Council's interest in more sustained DDR programmes. It is important that the DDR process be automatically included in peacekeeping mandates. As I mentioned, we are an operational agency. We work with non-governmental organizations and other agencies of the United Nations system on the ground, and we shall strengthen our efforts to protect children, to prevent their recruitment and to support their reintegration once they have been demobilized.

There is also a need to ensure that the lessons learned and the principles that come out of the DDR process are endorsed once and for all. In that sense, we believe that the demobilization of soldiers – as we said this morning – should not wait for peace, for formal DDR or for the required resources to be made available. We would also underline that we recognize that girls are particularly vulnerable and that they are also recruited as child soldiers. They need specific attention and assistance to be reintegrated. UNICEF is also engaged in extensive dialogue with our partners, and with partners to conflict, to ensure the release of children from combat as quickly as possible.

We are pleased that a very large number of representatives supported the list of countries — including an updated list and an expanded list — on an annual basis, including parties to conflicts who recruit child soldiers. It is an important tool for advocacy and

an important tool at the field level that we can use when we return to the country level.

Finally, we are very pleased with the strong support for action to prevent conflict. It is only when we prevent conflict that we can truly protect children against the recruitment, exploitation and abuse linked to armed conflict. UNICEF is working at the country level and with partners at the global level to promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

As stated by many delegations, our future is our children. UNICEF will continue to intensify its work with all members here and to strengthen the protection of children in armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Toole for his comments.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council will remain seized of this important matter.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.